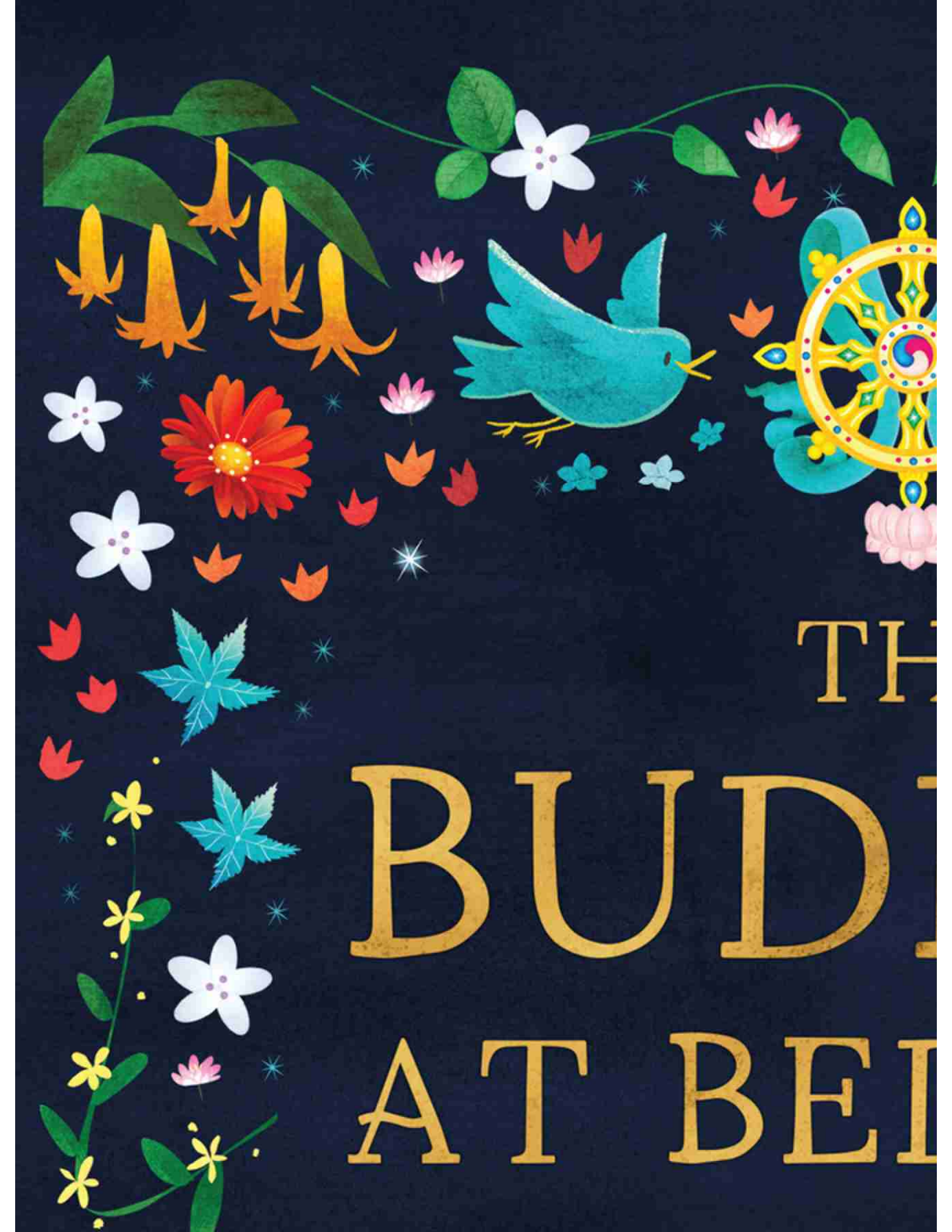
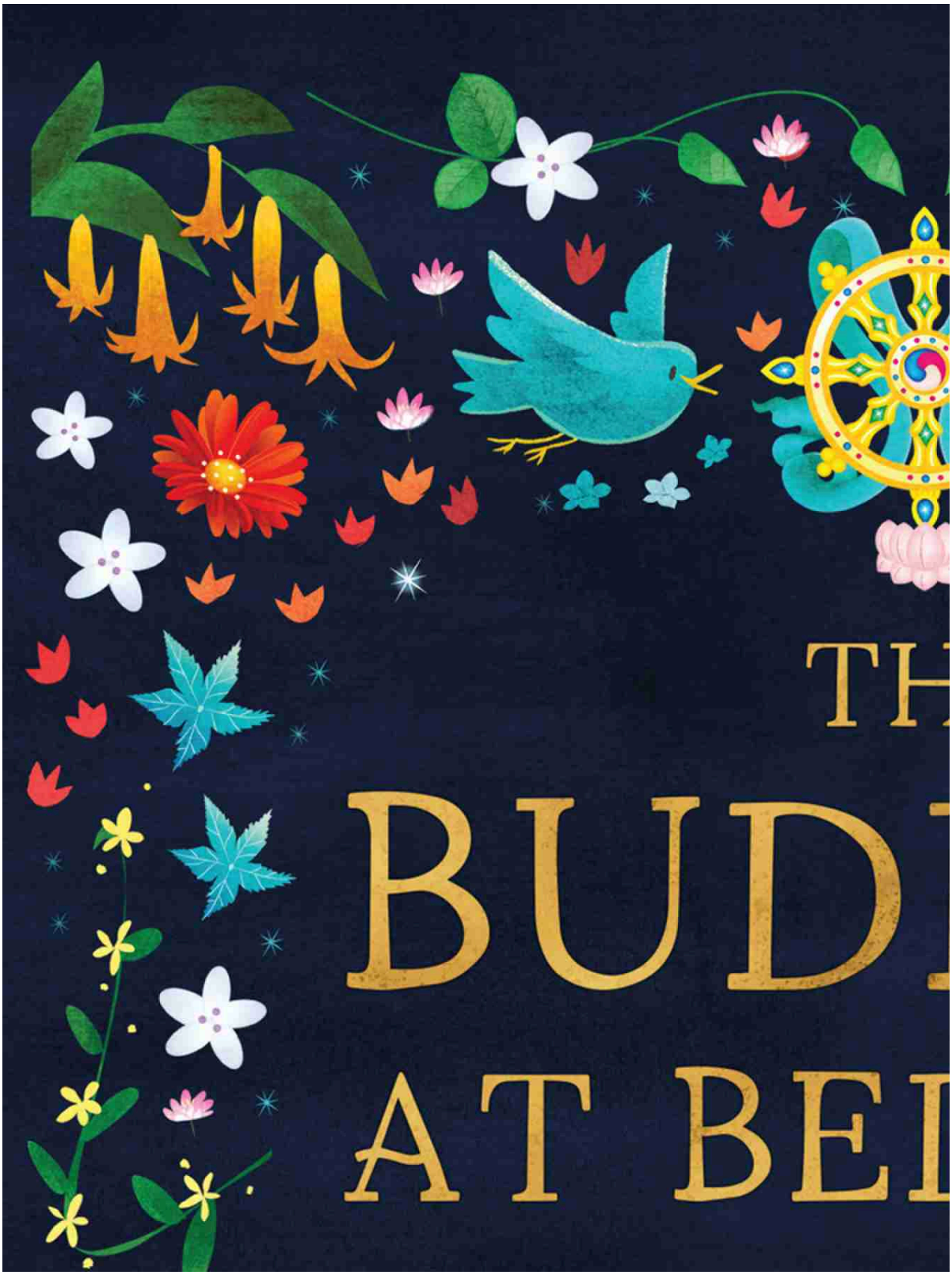

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The Buddha at Bedtime Treasury
Dharmachari Nagaraja

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Welcome to this treasury of Buddhist tales to share with your child at bedtime. Through my radio broadcasting work, I have discovered that nothing captures listeners' attention or gets a response quite like a good story. It was this observation that gave me the idea of retelling some of the Jataka Tales – ancient narratives, which are believed to have been told by the Buddha himself. My aim was to make the tales more accessible, not just to Buddhists but to everyone – and particularly to children. The collection of stories in this book is the result, and I hope that you enjoy sharing them with your child.



The Stories

In today's world, most people are used to experiencing stories through media such as radio, film and TV. In contrast, through the tales in this book, I hope to offer you the opportunity to take on the active mantle of storyteller. By engaging with the tales and reading them aloud with or to your child, you can create a powerful intimacy and set sail together into a world of wonder and imagination – sharing sights, sounds and, indeed, many feelings along the way. Stories, or parables, have been used throughout the ages and across cultures to communicate all sorts of important messages. The Buddha, for example, recognized that storytelling was the perfect vehicle to communicate his teachings (see pages 15–19). So what is it that makes stories such useful educational tools? Firstly, their varied settings, characters and plots provide listeners with something much more interesting and enchanting than any bare facts or theoretical concepts ever could. Secondly, stories often offer

something personal with which listeners can associate, not only making the information conveyed easier to assimilate and understand but also easier to remember. And thirdly, stories encourage listeners to conjure up pictures of the action in their own head and therefore to engage more actively with any underlying messages.

Children, in particular, tend to respond well to stories. In fact, there is no better way to engage and nurture a child's imagination and capacity for understanding complex issues than with the help of well-written stories. Reading the stories in this book to your children will transport them to all sorts of magical settings, full of lively characters, where they will learn many valuable lessons about themselves and the world around them without feeling in any way pressurized or patronized.



All the stories start in a similar way: your child is asked to relax, be still and listen carefully. This is to promote a focused yet tranquil state of mind in which they will be particularly receptive to listening, absorbing information, thinking creatively and allowing themselves to

be transported into the tales. This state will also encourage them to drift off to sleep after being read to at bedtime.

Through a wide range of settings, characters and predicaments, each story explores an aspect of the four primary Buddhist principles or values, known as the Four Noble Truths (see page 16), and of the Noble Eightfold Path (see pages 17–19), which the Buddha taught were fundamental to a contented life. At the end of every story, the key lesson of the tale is highlighted, as well as the challenges and solutions encountered, which will encourage conversation between you and your child on all manner of topics. This way, you can explore your child's developing views about themselves and the world, and help them to process any difficulties they might be going through.

CHOOSING A STORY

You don't need to read the book from start to finish. Each night, encourage your child to choose a story based on the title that appeals most, or the picture or character they are drawn to. Alternatively, you could choose for them, based on key themes that you feel might help your child most at that particular time (the contents page gives a useful summary of these and there's an index of themes at the end of the book to help you, too). For example, if you are worried that your child is finding it difficult to be accepted into a new school or some other new situation, you might read "Tintoretto, the Mouse from Town"; or if you think your child is feeling sad about the loss of something or someone (perhaps you've moved house, they've changed schools or they've suffered a bereavement), you might read "The Teddy Bear Tussle", with its theme of being brave and letting go.

OPENING UP TO MEDITATION

You may also like to encourage your child to explore one of the key aspects of Buddhism: meditation. The stories can be a useful starting point in this process, helping to relax and calm your child. Later in this introduction, I provide advice on incorporating meditation into your child's bedtime routine. You'll also find guided meditations inspired by the stories that you can do with your child at the back of the book.

Above all, enjoy the opportunity to share with your child the peace and understanding these simple yet profound Buddhist tales can awaken.





The Buddha and Buddhism

The timeless message of the Buddha continues to speak to millions of people around the world. With its emphasis on the reality of change in our lives, the importance of compassion for others, and its focus on the management of the mind to avoid unproductive anxiety and illusion, Buddhism seems in tune with many of the insights of contemporary psychology and education. For many it offers guidance on ethical and moral behaviour, as well as practical assistance in coping with the stresses of day-to-day living – skills that our children need now more than ever.

Buddhism is based on the teachings of the Buddha. The word "Buddha" means "enlightened one" and reflects the great wisdom the Buddha achieved in his lifetime. He began life as a privileged Nepalese prince called Siddharta Gautama, born around 566 BC. The oral traditions surrounding his life record that he grew increasingly troubled by the suffering he saw beyond the palace walls. He abandoned his position to search for an answer to the misery he saw in daily life. The Buddha wandered for years studying

with wise men, living simply and learning to meditate, but he was dissatisfied with the answers to life's problems he encountered.

Finally the Buddha's enlightenment came as he meditated beneath a bodhi tree. He developed an understanding of life that he came to call the "Four Noble Truths". These truths formed the basis of the Buddha's new philosophy and he rapidly gained a group of followers who were inspired by his teachings. After the Buddha's death in around 486 BC these followers continued to develop the ideas he'd initiated. Buddhism began to spread throughout India and then into Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia and Japan.

In Tibet (China), the spreading of the wisdom of the Buddha was symbolized by the conch shell. The shell could be blown like a trumpet, sending the Buddha's words throughout the world.



Today Buddhism is one of the fastest-growing spiritual movements in the West. The teachings of Buddhism may seem deceptively simple but in fact are both subtle and complex. The tales in this collection aim to help the young reader explore how the Buddha's

insights can help them in their daily life, just as Buddhism has helped millions of people around the world for thousands of years.





What Are the Buddha's Teachings?

The teachings of the Buddha promote fundamental positive principles and practices that transcend time and culture. As well as providing guidance on ethical and moral behaviour, Buddhism offers practical strategies for how to cope with the anxieties and struggles of daily life, skills that can help both our children and us to flourish no matter what life throws at us.

THE THREE JEWELS

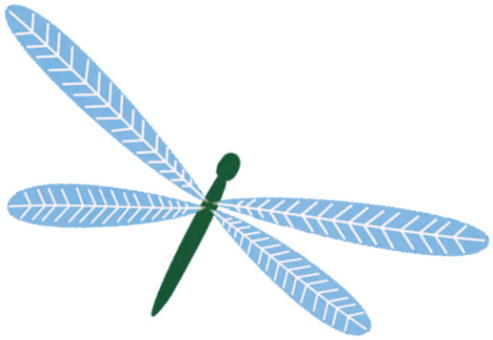
In Buddhism, choosing the Buddha as a role model is known as "going for refuge to the Buddha". There are three established "refuges" in Buddhism – or things that help us along our journey – called the Three Jewels. Making them the guiding lights in your life means that you are following the path of Buddhism. The Three Jewels are:

- **The Buddha** – referring to the "ideal" of Buddhahood as well as to the historical Buddha himself

- **The Dharma** – the collection of the Buddha's teachings and practices, which together provide a map that leads us to our goal
- **The Sangha** – the people we travel with on our journey through life, and who help and encourage us to follow the way of Buddhism

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

In addition, the Buddha identified the Four Noble Truths, Buddhism's founding principles. I have set these out below. Consider these in light of your own life and the lives of your children, who learn by your example:



- **First Truth:** Life inevitably involves suffering, whether physical or psychological. Many might find this view initially pessimistic. But for the Buddha this truth was neither optimistic nor pessimistic, simply realistic – the way things actually are.
- **Second Truth:** The reason we suffer is that we want things we do not or cannot have. Whether we want fame or fortune, or simply to be free from negative emotions (such as jealousy or anger), we become unhappy when life fails to live up to our expectations.

- **Third Truth:** The cure for suffering is to stop wanting. If we are prepared to make the effort to let go of our desire for what we don't have, happiness will follow. Of course many could argue that a better way to happiness would simply be to go and get the things we want. The Buddhist response is that we can never get everything we want, partly because the more we have, the more we want.
- **Fourth Truth:** The way to stop wanting more is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, which focuses not on changing things around us, but instead on changing our own mind about how we view ourselves, things, others and life.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Buddha taught that there are eight fundamental steps on the path to Enlightenment. He set these out clearly for his followers as:



- **Right Understanding:** This involves trying to see life as it really is, not how we believe it is or want it to be, accepting that hardship is part and parcel of life. For example, when a child starts school, they need to understand that first they have to learn the routine of school, where things are, how to behave, and so on. They can't just get into the classroom and expect to know it all. When we understand that life will be hard, even frustrating at times, we can meet any difficulties that arise more openly and creatively.
- **Right Intention:** The Buddha teaches that, along with Right Understanding, we need to show wholehearted commitment and persistence in our intention to do something. At school, for example, a child needs to *intend* to learn for learning to be successful.
- **Right Speech:** How we talk to ourselves and other people can have an impact not only on our experience of life, but also on our confidence and trust in ourselves and others. Right Speech means to speak truthfully, compassionately and considerately at all times.
- **Right Action:** This means treating others and everything around us as we would like ourselves and our belongings to be treated. So, for example, being kind and generous to classmates and looking after each other's and the school's property all follow the path of Right Action.
- **Right Livelihood:** For adults, this means being aware of the impact of our work on the environment and others. For children it's about undertaking everything they do, whether school work or pastimes, with care and consideration, ensuring that they don't negatively impact on other people or their surroundings. The

Buddha taught that a lack of respect for life in our work or play is a barrier to progress on the path to Enlightenment.

- **Right Effort:** Applying ourselves to tasks with patience, care and attention makes a positive outcome more likely. If we are tense, slapdash, impatient or obsessive in our work, we are more likely to make mistakes and our efforts will be fruitless. The aim is to cultivate an attitude of steady and cheerful determination in everything we do. Children often throw themselves into tasks with great enthusiasm but then quickly become frustrated. Remind them to slow down and take their time!
- **Right Mindfulness:** Whatever we do, at any age, our minds can easily get distracted. It's completely normal and natural for the mind to wander. However, when the mind does this, we are not inhabiting the present moment, fully appreciating all that moment has to offer. The Buddha teaches that the path to true inner peace requires complete focus in the present, rather than looking backward or forward. So, for example, a child who is opening a gift on their birthday would be better giving all their attention to that one act, rather than eagerly anticipating opening the next gift, or thinking about what they received in the last one, or the piece of cake they just ate.
- **Right Concentration:** If our attention is not distracted, we can really focus on everything we do. In this way, we become more fully attuned to ourselves and the world around us – we experience a sense of being at one with the world. No doubt you will have seen this when your child is calmly caught up in a favourite hobby.

The themes and guidelines of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path provide the backbone for the stories in this book.

Each story presents different dilemmas and solutions in a way that prepares young listeners to meet these challenges in their own lives. In “The Spoilt Prince”, for example, Prince Percival is given every toy, item of clothing or sweet treat he ever asks for. Yet, he doesn’t find happiness until all his possessions are washed away and he learns the simple pleasures of compassion and companionship.

By deepening your child’s understanding of the ways of Buddhism, even within the subtlety of this kind of storytelling, we encourage the practice of positive qualities, such as patience, kindness, love and gentle, humble self-confidence. And by using the stories and morals as a point of focus, we provide a gateway to that elusive downtime and, ultimately, to deep, restorative sleep.





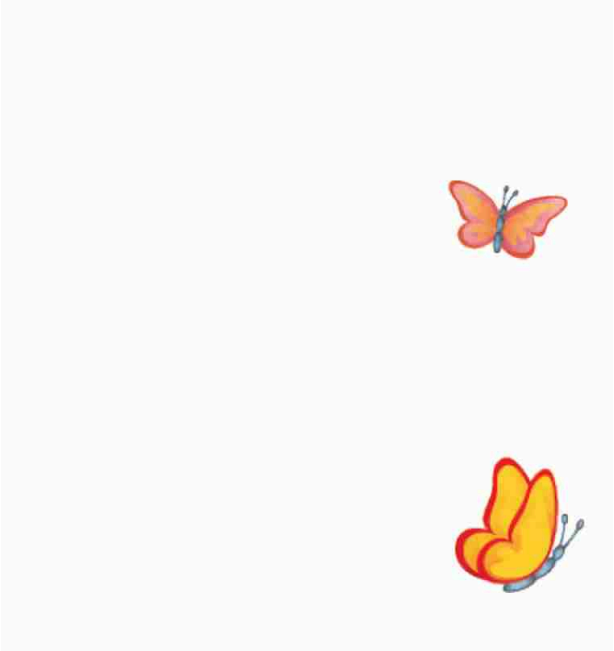
Why We Need Buddhism Today

Modern life can, at times, be rife with stress – whether about work, relationships, money or a whole range of other matters. Fortunately, ancient Buddhist teachings can help us to deal with this stress by encouraging us to infuse our all-too-often hectic, goal-driven lives with more of a sense of peace, love and compassion.

And it's not just adults who suffer from stress and anxiety. Children, too, have to cope with all sorts of stressful issues from an early age these days – for example, peer pressure, academic expectations, bullying, family breakdown. This means that the wise words of the Buddha can be just as beneficial for them, encouraging them to have a positive approach to life's problems and helping them to find a calm place inside themselves whenever they need it – a safe inner refuge.

Buddhist principles can also help to prevent us and our children from falling into the modern trap of always "wanting more" – as if external "things" in themselves, whether toys, clothes or whatever

else, are going to bring happiness. In contrast to such materialism, Buddhism teaches that children, like adults, will only develop into truly happy, well-rounded individuals by looking inward and recognizing the wonder of their own existence.



Another Buddhist tenet that is particularly relevant today is that we should be mindful of and appreciate every single, precious moment – as each is gone in the blink of an eye and no two are ever quite the same. This teaching not only encourages our children to focus on experiencing life to the full, but also helps them to accept the impermanence of all things, making it easier for them to understand changes that occur in their life – whether moving house, starting a new school, growing older or losing a loved one.





What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a quality of gentle attention that we can bring to our moment-to-moment experience at any time we choose in order to help us feel more engaged, fulfilled and calm. It is the ability to be open and present to what is actually happening, as we really are, whether we are walking, eating, playing, reading a story or even trying to get to sleep. For children this means encouraging them to let their attention settle on a single chosen object or activity and to become fully absorbed in it. Psychologists today contend that being mindful can increase a child's "flourishing", making it easier for a child to:

- gain greater appreciation of and enjoyment from what they do
- adopt a sense of calm and quiet contemplation
- deal with difficulties and anxieties in their lives
- respond to desires with compassion, not frustration or anger
- tune in more deeply to others' feelings and build deeper relationships
- compromise, arbitrate and solve problems
- develop the self-confidence to accept themselves just as they are

You can be mindful about pretty much anything. As you go about your daily routine, encourage your child to focus fully on what is happening – brushing their teeth, getting dressed, eating dinner and so on. You could start by asking a question, such as: "Can you feel the bristles of the toothbrush on your gums?" "What does that sweater feel like on your skin? How is that different to your raincoat?" And, for example, when you are eating cake together, encourage your child to really take their time, to taste it and enjoy the texture, too. Eventually, with practice, your child will begin to notice these sensations more for themselves.



Some experts believe that mindfulness works, in part, by helping people to simply accept their experiences (including painful emotions) rather than reacting to them angrily or turning away and ignoring them. As children grow and face new challenges, mindfulness will remain a skill that can help them build their confidence, cope with stress calmly and constructively, and cultivate increased inner wisdom. Being more mindful also involves learning to be non-judgemental and compassionate toward whatever arises in our moment-to-moment experience. This kind, non- judgemental attitude is the foundation of emotional intelligence, healthy social relationships and sound mental health throughout life.

The stories in this book encourage mindfulness in both your children and yourselves, the parents. As you prepare your child for bedtime, one or both of you may become completely distracted (what parent hasn't hurried through bedtime in anticipation of their own quiet time?). Choosing a story starts the process of not only catching your child's attention – but also of catching yours. With gentle encouragement and patience, as you focus on the illustrations and engage with the characters in each story, your child's mind and body will soon become more peaceful. And so will yours.



Introducing Meditation

One of the key elements of Buddhism is developing the practice of meditation. Meditation teaches us many important and valuable skills. We learn to calm our minds, we learn to disengage from the dramas and distractions of the day, and we discover a still place from where we can achieve a new level of awareness. Working with the ideas in this book is an easy and enjoyable way to introduce meditation to your child.

You can incorporate meditation into your child's bedtime routine – either instead of or after reading one of the stories in this book, which have a powerful meditative quality themselves in that they focus your child's attention and encourage them to visualize settings, characters and events.

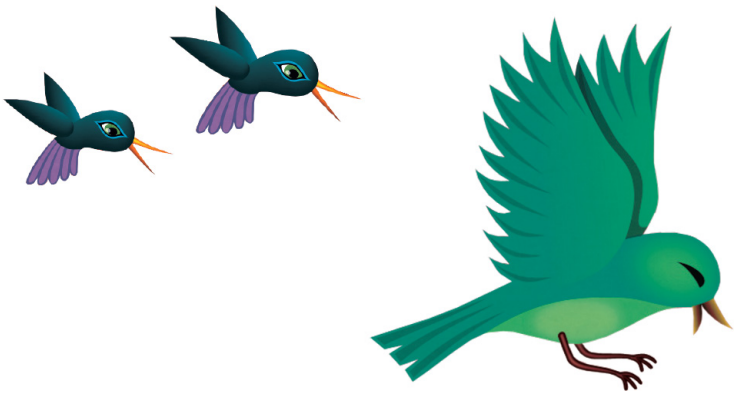
Meditation will calm your child before bed. In time they can learn to do the practice by themselves whenever they are feeling anxious, but at first try to set aside five to ten minutes each day in which to do a guided meditation (see pages 333–48).

One of the best methods of meditating is to simply sit still and focus your attention for a period of time on your breathing or on an object, such as a flower, a leaf or another inspiring item or image. Meditation begins by stilling the body and then works to calm the mind. In everyday life, your mind is like a choppy sea. As you meditate, you descend down into the quieter, stiller depths of the ocean (your being) and, afterwards, when you return your attention to everyday life, you find that the water's surface (your mind) has become much calmer. By teaching your child how to meditate, you are helping them to connect with their inner calm, their innate creativity and the essence of who they really are.

Far from being an inaccessible spiritual activity, as many people still believe, meditation can be very simple and fun for children, as well as enhancing their self-understanding and self-acceptance. Nowadays, forms of the practice are even finding their way into some schools to help with behavioural problems, such as hyperactivity and aggression. Once your child has learned how to meditate (see pages 333–48), they will be able to access a safe, quiet space in their mind at any time they feel a need for calm amid chaos.

One of the easiest meditation techniques for children to learn is visualization. Through creating vivid images in their mind's eye, a child can tap into their own potential, and into positive qualities, such as kindness and generosity. Visualization is particularly beneficial for children who have low self-esteem, as it can help them to imagine positive outcomes, which give them the confidence to interact better with others and make friends more easily and successfully.

By teaching your child how to consciously meditate, you'll bring deep contentment and focus into their everyday life.





Before You Begin

Before you begin to read the stories that follow with your child, it's worth spending a few minutes doing a simple stretching and relaxation exercise to bring both your child's and your own attention fully into the present. As well as helping to calm an agitated mind and/or body, the exercise will make it easier for both of you to concentrate on the story. And, of course, the exercise can also be highly enjoyable in itself.

Learning this simple technique also gives your child the tools to start releasing physical tension so that they can unwind and relax any time they feel stressed out or anxious. This means that they will know peace of mind is only ever a breath away.

Start by inviting your child to lie down either on their bed or on the floor with a pillow under their head. Sit comfortably beside them and ask them to gently turn their awareness to their breathing. Take a couple of deep breaths together – in and out. Then, when you are ready, say in a slow and relaxed voice:

"Close your eyes. Wiggle your toes ... wiggle, wiggle ... and relax. Now point your toes away from you ... and pull your toes up toward you. Away from you, toward you ... and relax.

Now, gently take a really big breath and imagine air filling your whole body, from your head down to your toes, as if you are blowing up like a balloon. Slowly let the breath out, little by little, letting your body sink right down into your bed or the floor. Now, squeeze your hands into tight little balls ... and open them up, stretching your fingers out wide. Squeeze your hands tightly again and open them up, stretching your fingers as wide as you can ... and relax.

Take another really big breath in and imagine air filling your whole body, from your head down to your toes, as if you are blowing up like a balloon. Slowly let the breath out, little by little, allowing your body to sink right down into the comfort of your bed or the floor.

Now, stretch your arms above your head and your feet, so that you feel as long as possible ... and relax as much as you can. Stretch again ... and relax. Stretch again ... and relax.



Now, bring your arms back down to your sides and place your hands on your tummy. Scrunch up your face, so that all your muscles tighten as much as possible ... and relax. Now, give a big smile ... and relax all the muscles in your face. Once more, smile ... and relax.

Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and feel your tummy get bigger. Breathe out slowly through your mouth and feel your tummy go lower. Relax, relax your whole body ...

Keep breathing deeply until you feel really relaxed, relaxed enough to listen to and soak up the magical story you're about to be told."





BELLA AND THE MAGIC SOUP

Relax, close your eyes and imagine a little girl called Bella who was always getting distracted. One day she was made responsible for a very special task, but she almost forgot to do it. Would you like to know what it was? Listen carefully to her story.

It had rained heavily all night as Bella slept. When she woke the next morning the sun was shining and the whole world sparkled. Bella jumped out of bed and ran to the window. The sunlight flew in and tickled her toes.

“It’s such a lovely day, I must get outside,” Bella thought to herself. She dressed very quickly and jumped down the stairs two at a time. But just as her hand reached for the front door knob, her mother, Mrs Button, called out: “Bella! I need help in the kitchen.”

In the kitchen Mrs Button was wrestling with a big soup pot, trying to get its lid on. Just when she thought she had got it on securely, the lid sprang off into the air!

“Bella, can you get me some string?” asked Mrs Button.

Bella went to a drawer and found some string and handed it to her mother.

“I’m making magic soup,” said Mrs Button. “It’s got a lot of pepper in it and a lot of magic, and it’s so powerful it’s making the pot sneeze.”



“Ah-choo!” cried the pot, and the lid flew through the air. Mrs Button caught it and, quick as a flash, she got it back on the pot and tied it down with the string.

“Phew, what a bother!” she said, wiping her brow. “Now, Bella, I’ve made this special magic soup for Granny. She’s had a small accident.”

Tears sprang into Bella’s eyes, but her mother reassured her quickly. “Granny’s all right. She just slipped over while she was doing some work in the garden. I want you to take her this Bumps and Bruises Cure Soup to help her get better,” said Mrs Button.

“Poor Granny Button,” replied Bella. “I’ll take the soup to her right away.”

Bella rushed out of the kitchen and through the front door and was halfway down the path before she realized she had forgotten the soup.

“You’d forget your own head if it wasn’t stuck on,” said her mother, smiling. She handed Bella the pot of soup.

“Now, concentrate and take this straight to Granny’s house, and no dilly-dallying on the way,” said Mrs Button.

“Yes, Mum,” replied Bella as she clutched the soup.

Bella headed for her granny’s house, but soon she was feeling rather hot. It was hard work carrying the heavy pot of soup, especially as it kept sneezing.

Bella stopped in the middle of a field of flowers and, putting the pot on the ground, she peeled off her coat.

“Phew, that’s better,” thought Bella.

Just then a breeze rustled the flowers, and a beautiful cloud of butterflies rose into the sky. Bella clapped her hands in delight and danced after them as they fluttered away. She didn’t notice as the pot sneezed again and bounced off into the long grass.

A big red butterfly landed on Bella’s nose and tickled her. She sneezed, and that reminded her about the soup pot. She ran back to where she had left it, but it was gone! Bella searched everywhere, but the pot was nowhere to be seen. Hot, bothered and upset, she sat down and began to cry.

Her crying woke a caterpillar from his afternoon nap.

“Young lady, why are you so upset?” asked the caterpillar. “Can I help?”

“My granny hurt herself and I was taking her some soup. Only I got distracted and I put down the pot, and now it’s gone and it’s all my fault,” sobbed Bella.

“There now, don’t cry,” said the caterpillar. “I’m low to the ground and see everything. I’ll find your pot.”

And sure enough, after a little while the caterpillar called out to Bella, “I spy with my little eye something beginning with ‘P’.”

“Pot?” asked Bella hopefully.

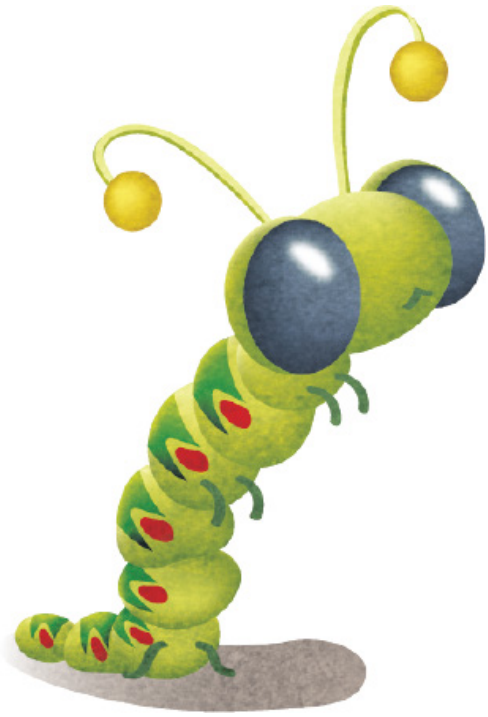
Just then the pot gave an extra large sneeze and flew into the air. Bella ran and caught it before it could fall back into the long grass.

“Thank you, Caterpillar,” said Bella. “I’m off to Granny’s house now and nothing is going to distract me this time.”

“Right you are,” said the caterpillar. “Oh, look out!”

Bella had set off again, but almost walked into a tree.

“That was close!” Bella thought. “I need to concentrate while I’m looking around.”



The beautiful cloud of butterflies wafted around her but this time Bella didn’t get distracted. She came to a wood where some of her friends were laughing, climbing trees and swinging from the branches. They called out to her but Bella kept her eyes on the path. Although she longed to go and join the fun, she called out, “I can’t

play today, I'm busy." She concentrated on what she had to do, and wasn't bothered by her friends' teasing.

Bella's best friend, Daisy, ran after her.

"Wait!" she called. "I have pocket money. Mum says I can buy ice cream. Do you want to come with me?"

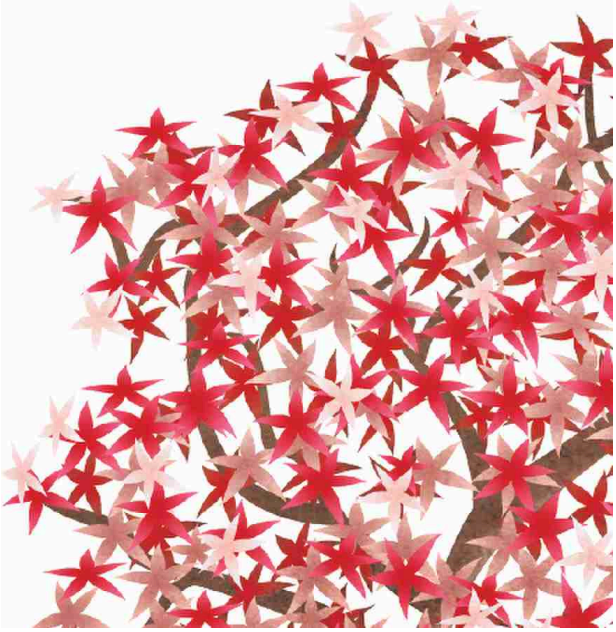
Bella's mouth began to water. An ice cream would have been so lovely. But she remembered her poor granny and held on to the soup pot firmly. "I would if I could, but I can't, thank you," she replied.

With a rumbling tummy, Bella finally made it to her granny's house. Granny ate all the magic Bumps and Bruises Cure Soup and was soon feeling much better.

When she'd finished, Granny put a large bowl of Bella's favourite chocolate-chip ice cream in front of her and poured her a tall glass of homemade lemonade.

"There you are, Bella," said Granny. "That's my gift to you in return for your kindness in bringing me the soup."

Bella smiled. Knowing she'd helped to make her granny well again was the best reward she could have had.





IT'S EASY TO GET
NOT FINISH SOMETH
TRY TO CONCENTR





THE MAGIC MOONLIGHT TREE

Relax, close your eyes and picture yourself in a steamy tropical jungle. This tale is about two young gibbons called Ginger and Snapp, who one day made a great discovery. Would you like to know what it was? Listen carefully to their story.

"Wow!" exclaimed Ginger. The two gibbons were staring up open-mouthed at an enormous tree, unlike any they'd seen before. The majestic tree stood on the edge of a deep ravine. Its leaves were vivid blue and shaped like stars and its branches were heavy with shiny oval fruits the colour of a silvery moon.

Ginger reached up and a fruit came free with a "pop!" Ginger and Snapp sniffed at it curiously.

"Do you think it's poisonous?" asked Snapp.

“I don’t know,” said Ginger. “It smells delicious.”

“I think we should take it to Queen Echa,” Snapp suggested. “She knows absolutely everything. She’ll be able to tell us if it’s safe to eat.”

Queen Echa lived high on a mountainside in a tree that was so tall it reached above the clouds. The wise queen gasped when Ginger and Snapp gave her the mysterious fruit. “I’ve heard of this fruit. I don’t know its name, but I believe that, once upon a time, it grew everywhere in our land. Then the humans came. They ate all the fruit and chopped down all the trees to build houses.”

“That was selfish and very silly,” said Ginger.

“I’m afraid humans aren’t very smart,” said Queen Echa sadly.

She shared the fruit with Ginger and Snapp. It was the most scrumptious food they’d ever tasted.

Queen Echa wanted to share the wonderful fruit with all her subjects. She asked Ginger and Snapp to lead her and a large party of gibbons down to the extraordinary tree.

When they reached it, Queen Echa solemnly hugged the tree and whispered: “We’ll take only a little of your precious fruit now and we’ll spread the seeds throughout the forest. In that way your family can flourish once again.”

The tree seemed to shake with delight as the gibbons clambered among its branches gathering the silver fruit.

Suddenly a trumpet blasted and all the gibbons froze. The forest fell silent. Another trumpet blast, closer this time, mingled with voices and the “clip-clop” of horses’ hooves.

“Humans!” said Queen Echa softly. “Everyone be still.” The gibbons watched a procession led by King Barnabas pass right under the tree. Just then, a ripe fruit “popped” and dropped in front of King Barnabas. He came to a halt. He looked down at the fruit and

then up into the tree. He saw the frightened faces of dozens of gibbons looking back at him. As the king and his men dismounted to investigate the fruit, the gibbons scrambled higher into the tree.



“Can I eat it or is it poisonous?” the king asked.

The king’s taster took a small bite and declared it safe to eat and utterly delicious.

“What a great day,” proclaimed the king. “We have discovered a tasty new fruit and a tree full of gibbons. We shall eat well tonight. Set fires around the tree and smoke out the apes.” His men went quickly to do his bidding.



Queen Echa had to act fast. She raced along a branch that hung out over the ravine, launched herself into the air and flew across. As she landed on the other side she grabbed a long vine attached to a nearby tree. She tied the loose end around her waist, then threw herself back across the ravine to the fruit tree. But the vine was just a little too short and Queen Echa could only catch the tip of the branch. She held on tightly as Ginger and Snapp ran to her aid. The other gibbons looked on horrified. Without a care for her own safety,

Queen Echa called to Ginger and Snapp: “Gather the others quickly and use me as a bridge. Get to safety.”

“The humans will catch you!” they cried.

“Don’t argue. Do what I say!” ordered the queen. Ginger and Snapp rushed back into the tree and instructed all the gibbons to escape. They clambered across the queen’s back and along the vine to the safety of the other side of the ravine.

All this time the king’s men were busy collecting more wood to add to the fires. When King Barnabas shouted out that the gibbons were escaping, his captain strung his bow and took aim at Queen Echa’s heart.

“Stop, don’t shoot!” ordered the king. “I want you to bring me that gibbon, and treat her gently.”

The captain climbed into the tree and brought Queen Echa before the king. He expected her to quake with fear but instead she just smiled.

“Why are you smiling?” asked King Barnabas.

“My subjects are all free and safe. That’s all that matters. If you want to be a good ruler you must put the lives of others before your own.”

King Barnabas was stunned by her words and bowed his head in respect. “You’re a noble and selfless queen. You’ve taught me a great lesson today. I’m humbled.”

King Barnabas was so moved by Queen Echa’s selfless behaviour that he made a royal decree: “I hereby state that, from this day forth, this tree and all its fruits are to be protected from harm.”

To celebrate, the humans and gibbons sat together around the tree and had a great feast. Queen Echa asked Ginger and Snapp to present the king with seeds from the oval fruits so that he might grow his own trees.

The king was so delighted he made another pronouncement: “This fruit, which has no name we know of, will from this day be called, ‘Queen Echa fruit’.”

All the king’s men and all the gibbons, but especially Ginger and Snapp, cheered very loudly indeed.




ACTING SELFLESSLY
OF OTHERS IS ON
THINGS YOU CAN





THE NEW GIRL

Relax, close your eyes and picture the toughest, meanest kid in school. This story is about Hazel, a little girl who frightened everybody until one day the most incredible thing happened to her. Listen carefully to her story.

“She’s coming!” cried Tiny, running back to his seat. The classroom fell ominously silent as the door flew open. It wasn’t the teacher who scared the children. It was a girl called Hazel Nutt. Some said she’d been bullied when she was small. Others said she was born mean. But most people just tried to keep out of her way. The only time Hazel smiled was when she made someone cry.

Miss Poppy, the teacher, came in behind Hazel. She was just sitting down when there was a knock at the door and another girl walked in. As she entered the room the sun came out and seemed to fall on the floor before her.

“I’m Rosie Peach,” she said. “I’m the new girl.”

For the rest of that day the atmosphere in the classroom was light and happy, as if a shadow had lifted. Rosie's smile was infectious to all except Hazel Nutt, who was feeling something she didn't often feel. She felt frightened.

The final bell rang. Shoving away everyone in her path, Hazel went to the nearby forest and angrily pulled out her catapult. "I need some cheering up," she said to herself.

Hazel spied a rabbit sunning itself in a pool of light. Quick as a flash she loaded her catapult with a stone, took aim and fired. The stone hit the rabbit on the thigh. The animal jumped in fright and Hazel ran after it, laughing. Then she stopped dead. There was Rosie, sitting in the grass, stroking the rabbit and singing to it. The rabbit's leg was bleeding.

"You give me that rabbit. It's mine!" yelled Hazel.

"This rabbit belongs to itself," said Rosie. "It's wild."

"It's just a dumb animal," laughed Hazel. "Are you a bit stupid? You talk to animals, do you?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. Come closer and listen yourself." Rosie hummed softly to the rabbit.

"Is this a trap?" thought Hazel. She moved closer, ready to fight if she had to. "I can't hear anything," she said.

"Closer, come closer," said Rosie.

One of Rosie's hands was resting on the rabbit's wound. As Hazel leaned forward, Rosie's other hand shot up and touched Hazel on her chest over her heart. Hazel froze. The world started spinning. She wanted to jump and laugh. She also wanted to eat grass! What was happening to her? A sharp pain bit into her thigh and she screamed. Her leg was bleeding. A girl was running toward her with a catapult. Hazel could make no sense of it. She limped into the undergrowth. The pain was terrible. Then she saw Rosie, sitting on

the grass and singing. She laid her head in the girl's lap and, as Rosie gently stroked her, the pain began to ease.



Rosie took her hand from Hazel's heart.

"What did you do to me?" sobbed Hazel.

"I let you see and feel what this little rabbit saw and felt as you hurt it," said Rosie.



"I'm so sorry." Hazel stroked the rabbit. Then she took it home and cared for it until it was better. From then on, Hazel was no longer a frightening, angry girl. Soon, everyone wanted to be her friend. And no- one noticed that Rosie, the new girl, didn't come back to school. In some ways it seemed as if Hazel was the new girl now.


SOMETIMES W
TOUGH, TO HIDE
OR CONFUSED





ESTER AND LUCKY



Relax, close your eyes and picture Ester, an old woman who many years ago had been an acrobat but now earned her meagre living telling tales about the circus. One night she had a special delivery that changed her life forever. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully.

Ester was sitting alone by the fire when there was a loud “knock, knock” at the front door. “Who can be calling at this time of night?” she wondered. She opened the door, but no-one was there. Then she took a step back in surprise.

On the doorstep was a large basket with a baby elephant inside! Ester dragged the basket into the house. The little elephant was sleeping soundly wrapped in a blanket.

“Well, my horoscope said I’d receive an unexpected delivery. This must be it!” she chuckled, smiling at the sleeping baby elephant. “I’ll call her ‘Lucky’,” she said.

Ester never worried why Lucky had been left on her doorstep. Lucky just needed someone to care for her – and that is what Ester did. There was not much money in circus tales, so Ester took in washing and did any little jobs that would help feed Lucky.



Lucky grew into a very happy little elephant. Every day she swam with the local children in the pools under the waterfalls in the forest. They shared lemonade and ice cream, picnicking among the ancient, moss- covered trees.

In autumn, Lucky and the children played chase among the fallen leaves. When winter rolled out a carpet of snow, they built snow elephants. Then the air grew warmer and spring brought forth buds on the trees. Many years passed in this way and soon Lucky was a fully grown elephant.

One day Lucky said to Ester, “Come to the woods today. You’re looking tired. I’m sure the walk will do you good.”

“But I must go to work,” replied Ester. “If I don’t work there’s no money, and if there’s no money there’s no food.”

Lucky hadn’t realized that Ester’s storytelling wasn’t just for fun. Or that all that washing was to get money to buy food. She looked at Ester and saw for the first time that she’d grown old. “I’m young and strong,” Lucky thought. “I’ve had plenty of playing. Now I must make time to work.”

Lucky decided to find some work to earn money. She had no idea what she could do, but she headed off along the river to ask the people in the next village if she could help.

Heavy rains had washed away the bridge to the village, but Lucky calmly waded through the waters. She was met by a cheering crowd of villagers. Since the flood they’d had to travel far upriver to find a safe crossing place.

The mayor said: “Great elephant, we’ll pay you a silver piece each time you help us to cross the river.”

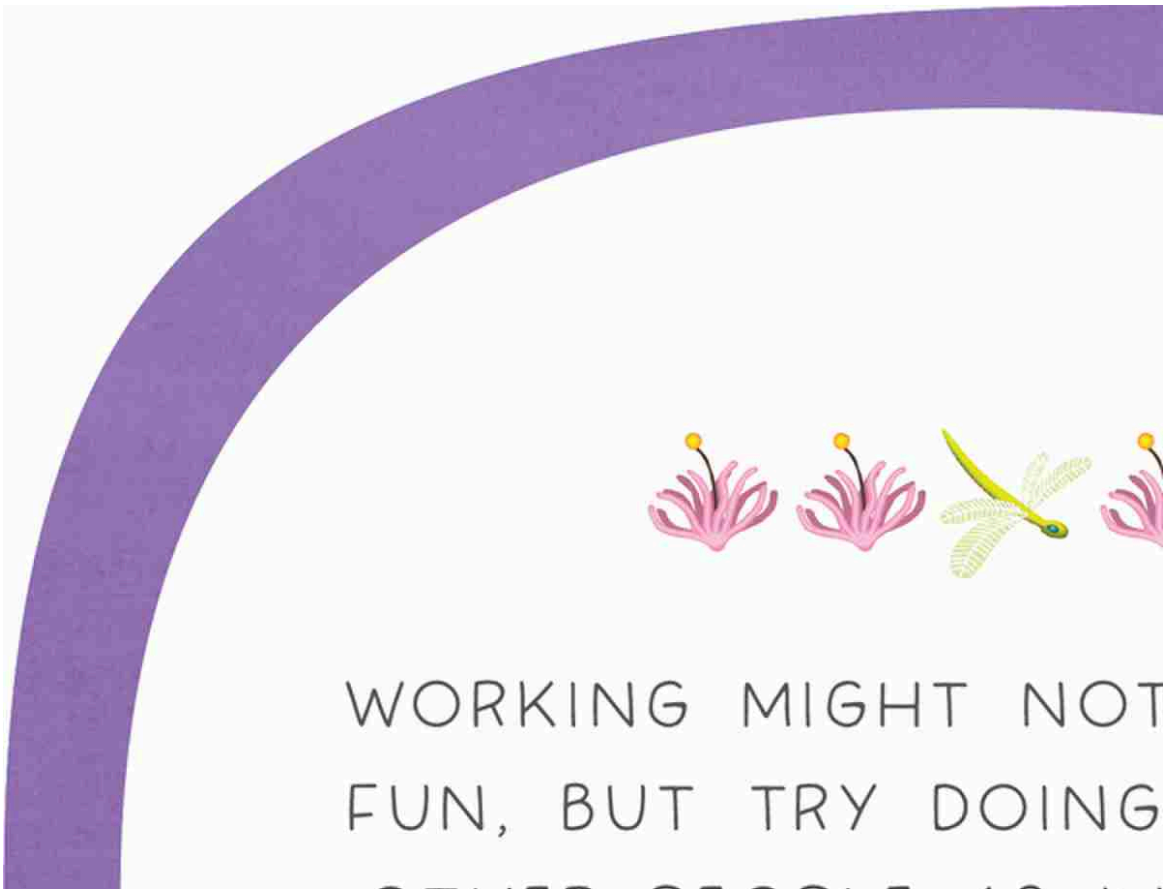


“Happy to help,” said a delighted Lucky. She enjoyed chatting to the villagers as she carried them. At the end of the day the mayor gave her a pouch full of silver pieces.

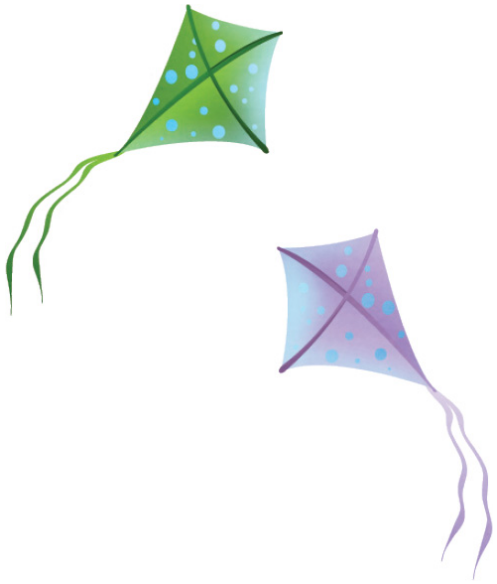
When she got home, Lucky gave Ester the silver.

“Now you can stay home and I’ll work,” said Lucky, pleased that her work had made so many people happy.

From that day forth Lucky worked and Ester stayed at home. When Lucky had finished her day’s work, they’d sit in the garden and Ester would tell stories of the circus – just for the fun of it.







THE SHINY RED TRAIN

Relax, close your eyes and imagine that you live with all your family in a tiny shack on a cold and windy beach. This story is about Michael, a little boy whose family was very poor. All his clothes were old and ragged and his toys had all been found on the beach. More than anything, Michael wanted a new toy. Listen carefully to his story.

One day, Michael and his sister Claire visited the town's toy shop to look at the toys. Michael found the most beautiful toy train he had ever seen.

"Put it back," said Claire. She tried to wrestle the shiny red train from her brother's grip.

"But I want it!" protested Michael.

“We haven’t got any money,” replied Claire firmly. She managed to prize the train from his hands and Michael burst into tears. Everyone in the shop stared at them. Claire grabbed her brother’s hand and pulled him toward the door, knocking down a pile of stripy hula hoops. Everyone laughed as the children ran out the door.

Michael cried all the way home. His family’s beach shack was built from the bones of an enormous whale. Its walls were made of driftwood and the roof was made from pieces of plastic sheeting that had washed up on the beach. Claire loved their home, but Michael hated it. He wanted to live in a proper house. And he hated his old broken toys from the beach. His father fixed them as best he could, but they were not the same as new toys.

Michael went to bed that night feeling very sorry for himself. He couldn’t stop thinking about the shiny red train he’d held in the toy shop that day. He wanted it so much, more than anything else in the world. Finally he fell asleep.

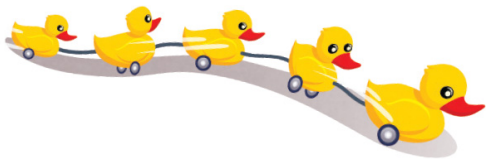
Michael opened his eyes. He was standing in the toy shop with Claire, but this time the whole place seemed to be alive! Toy cars beeped and flashed their lights at him, and trains shot past on invisible tracks. Teddy bears laughed and jumped from shelf to shelf and dolls twirled in their dresses.

“Could this be a dream?” Michael wondered, but everything was so real. Bright kites flew above his head and, when Michael looked up, the ceiling itself looked like the night sky, aglow with hundreds of little lights that twinkled like stars.

“It must be magic,” Michael thought.

The shop door chimed as customers came and went, loaded with bags and boxes.

The cash register drawer flew open as the shopkeeper, Mrs Holly, rang up sale after sale.



Everyone looked full of joy. Michael felt happy too. On a cabinet right in front of him stood the shiny red train. It tooted at him and Michael reached out and touched it.

Claire pulled at his sweater. “Let’s try the lucky dip.”

“I want the red train,” Michael said.

“But we haven’t enough money, I told you that already,” she replied. “We’ve got enough for the lucky dip, though.”



Claire gave Mrs Holly the money for the lucky dip and thrust her hand into the bucket piled high with brightly coloured packages. “Oh! A beautiful doll!” cried Claire as she unwrapped her present.

When no-one was looking, Michael grabbed the red train and hid it under his sweater. As he did so, the bright lights of the shop faded and the teddy bears stopped laughing. With Claire close behind, Michael hurried to the door and plunged into the crowd of shoppers.

It was dark and cold outside. Michael pulled out the shiny train from under his sweater.

Claire began to cry. “You stole it,” she said.

“I don’t care,” Michael replied. His voice was cold and hard. “I wanted it.”

“But it belongs to Mrs Holly,” said Claire.

“Well, it’s mine now. She has plenty of toys.”

Michael walked down to the sea where the moon was shining brightly on the waves. He was admiring the way his train glittered in the moonlight, but then he spied a woman walking along the shore. He hid the train under his sweater again. As the woman came closer, he saw she was crying and scattering bows and wrapping paper into the sea.

Michael realized it was Mrs Holly.

“Why are you throwing away all your wrapping paper?” Michael asked her. He felt frightened.

“I’ve no need of it now,” Mrs Holly said sadly. “Little boys and girls come to my lovely shop and take my toys. If you don’t pay for them, I’ve no money to pay my bills. Today the landlord took my shop away.” She began to sob. “I don’t know how I’ll feed my children.”





The train hidden under Michael’s sweater felt hot. It was so hot it was like an ache next to his heart. Michael was ashamed. He understood now how selfish he had been. He pulled out the shiny red train and handed it to Mrs Holly.

“I’m sorry, please forgive me.”

As Mrs Holly took the train, rainbow-coloured puffs of smoke belched from its funnel and its whistle tooted loudly.

The train shot joyfully into the night sky, leaving a trail of sparkly stars behind it before returning to Mrs Holly's arms.

The shopkeeper smiled as she leaned forward and kissed Michael on the forehead.

Suddenly, Michael was dazzled by morning sunlight. He saw above him the whale bones holding up the roof. He was in his own bed. "It must have been a dream!" he laughed.

Several weeks later Michael walked through the door of the toy shop. He went straight up to the counter and gave Mrs Holly all the money he'd saved from doing little jobs for the people of the town.

"May I please buy the shiny red train?" he asked her.

"Of course, Michael," smiled Mrs Holly.

As he walked out of the shop with his train wrapped in a big ribbon, Mrs Holly called after him: "Thank you, Michael." She winked at him. And Michael smiled back.



DOING THE RIGH
NOT BEING SELFISH
LIFE SEEMS TO BE.





THE SHEEP STEALERS

Relax, close your eyes and imagine that you live on a sheep farm in the Scottish Highlands. This story is about two young brothers, Hamish and Dougal Woolly. One day their father had an accident and the two boys had to grow up fast. Listen carefully to their story.

"Oooops!" cried Mr Woolly. Hamish and Dougal rushed out to the farmyard to find their father on the ground, clutching his ankle. "I slipped off the ladder," he explained. "And now I can't stand up!"

The boys carried their father indoors. "You boys are going to have to take the sheep to market," said Mr Woolly. "Use the ferry to cross the river. The forest is too dangerous."

"But, Father, that'll take twice the time!" protested Hamish. "I'm not frightened of the forest."

“Well, you should be! There are thieves and dangerous animals and I won’t be there to protect you. I want you to go by the river, and no argument about it,” said Mr Woolly.

The boys rounded up the sheep and set out the next morning. When they reached the river there was no ferry to be seen. The boys waited and waited but no-one came.

“Let’s go through the forest,” said Hamish. “It’s much less effort.”

“But Father said it wasn’t safe,” said Dougal.

“Father worries too much,” replied Hamish.

In the end Hamish stormed off to the forest, taking half the sheep with him. “See you at the market!” he called.

Dougal sat with the remaining sheep wondering how to cross the river. “Perhaps I could make some stepping stones,” he thought, but the rocks he threw into the water sank out of sight. Then he built a raft, but that sank, too.

“Those ideas didn’t work, but I’ll keep trying,” he said. He toiled all day, but with no success. When it got dark he went to sleep, trusting the answer would be clearer in the morning.

By contrast, Hamish had a lazy day leading his sheep through the forest. When night fell, he lay down to sleep under a tree, full of confidence. “I’ll show Dougal,” he said.

In the forest, a gang of sheep rustlers led by Fingers the wolf had followed Hamish’s progress all day. In the dead of night Fingers, and his two mean-looking foxes, spirited away the sheep to their den.

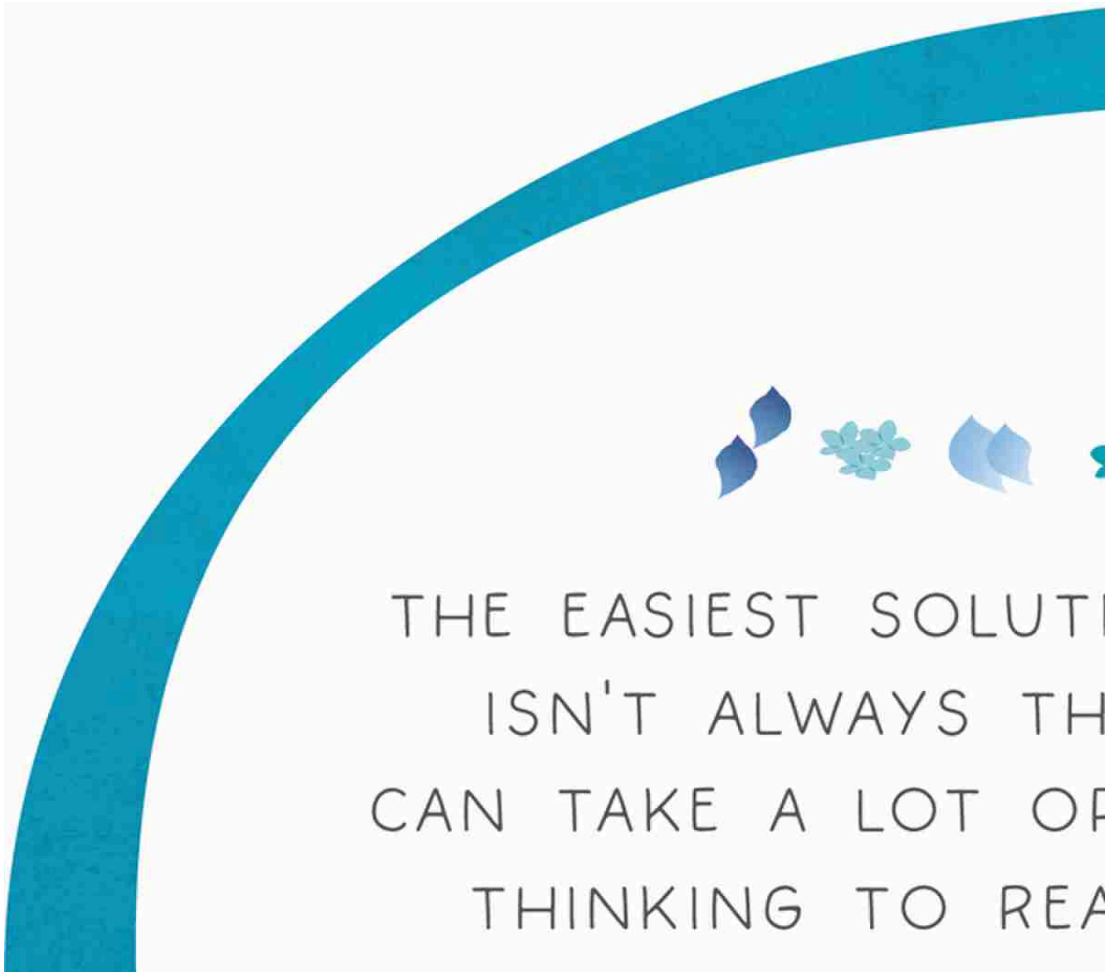
“We’ll get a fine price for these sheep,” Fingers said.

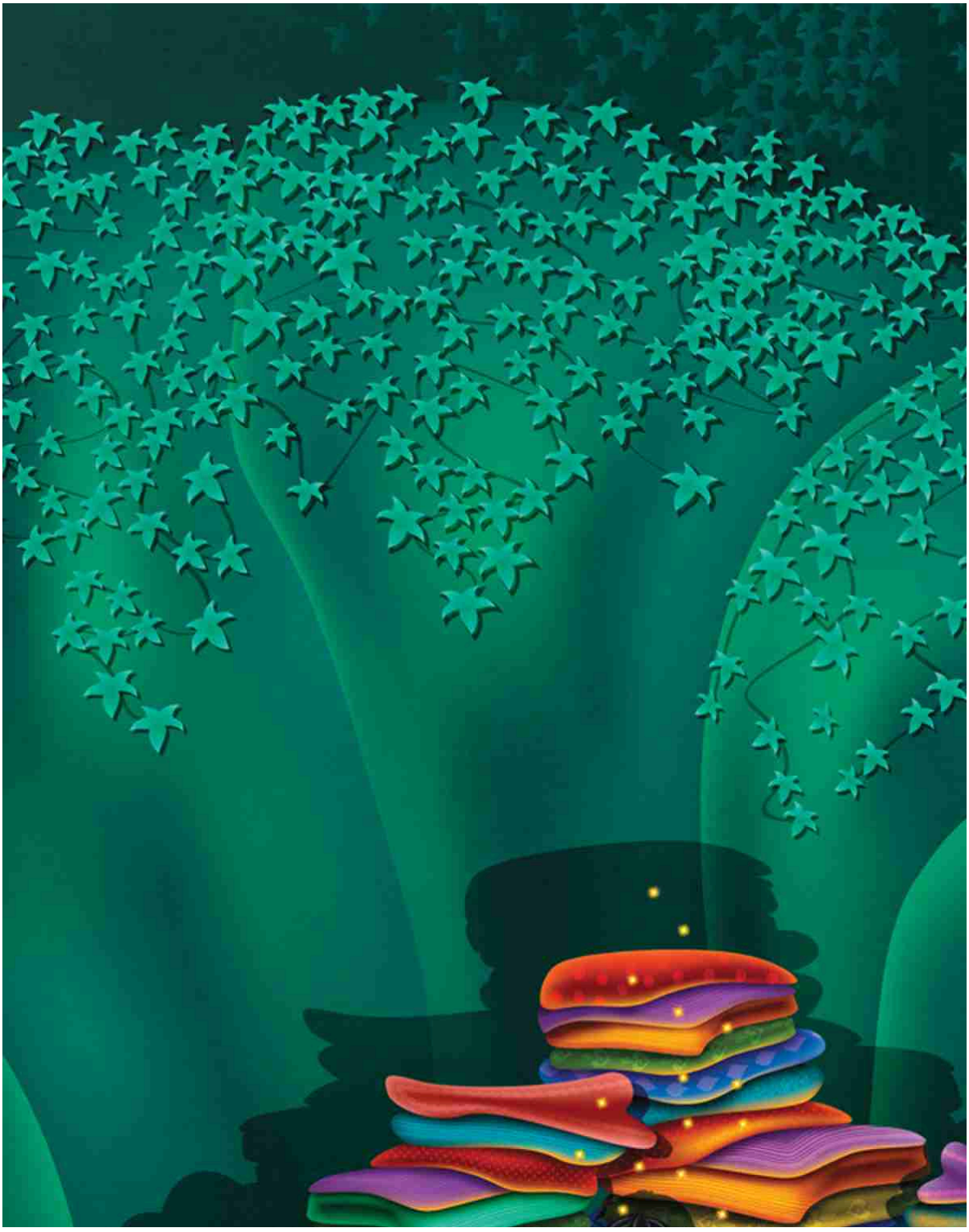
Down by the river, the morning sun woke Dougal. “Got it!” he suddenly exclaimed. He climbed up to a tall tree and began chopping at its base with his axe. The tree fell right across the river, forming a bridge for the sheep to cross.

In the forest Hamish woke to find all his sheep had gone. He searched and searched, but couldn't find any trace of them. "I've let everyone down," he thought as he walked home. "And we badly needed the money."



Two days later Dougal arrived at the market and sold his sheep for a handsome profit. When he arrived home, his parents and Hamish were waiting to welcome him. Hamish looked so forlorn his father gave him a hug. "The most important thing is that we're all safe and together again, but I hope you've learned a lesson," said Mr Woolly to Hamish. "There are no shortcuts. Success takes hard work."


THE EASIEST SOLUTI
ISN'T ALWAYS TH
CAN TAKE A LOT OF
THINKING TO REA





ALOKA AND THE BAND OF ROBBERS

Relax, close your eyes and picture yourself deep in a jungle in Thailand, far from the nearest village. This story is about a clever boy called Aloka, who was sent away from his village to study in the great temple of Golden City. One day he was walking home to his village for the holidays when he met a band of robbers! Would you like to find out what happened? Listen carefully to his story.

Night was drawing in as Aloka made his way along the jungle trail. Ferns and palm trees lined the path and vines climbed into the sky. He was preparing to camp for the night when he met a family of merchants returning from market.

“Why don’t you camp with us tonight?” said Taai, the father of the family.

“Yes, come and share our meal,” said Rajini, his wife.

Aloka smiled gratefully. He had been walking for several days on his own and was very glad to have some company. He joined the family around a blazing camp fire and shared a delicious meal with them.



After they’d all eaten their fill, Taai put more logs on the fire. Then his six children gathered around to listen to him tell a story.

“Once upon a time there was a young prince called Siddartha,” began Taai. “Although he was very rich and handsome, he was not happy. Siddartha could see that many people in his kingdom suffered. He wanted to help them but he didn’t know how, until one day he found the secret. Now, children, do you know what that secret was?”

The youngest child, little Mai, spoke up. “The power to be happy is in your own mind,” she said.

“Very good, Mai,” said her father. “That’s exactly what the prince learned. Once he could control his mind through meditation, nothing

had the power to frighten or upset him. He could help people, because he was at peace. And he taught people how they could help themselves."

The children listened to Prince Siddartha's adventures. They'd all heard the story many times before, but they loved it just the same. A large silver moon climbed into the night's sky and Taai's gentle voice lulled the family into sleep. Then Taai himself closed his eyes and began to snore softly.

But young Aloka was wide awake. He was very excited by Prince Siddartha's story. Now everything he'd learned at school about controlling his mind seemed to make sense.

Aloka wrapped himself in a blanket and walked over to a nearby fig tree where he would not disturb the family. He wanted to think about the ideas calmly and walked slowly back and forth in the cool night air. As he let his attention focus on his breathing, his mind began to settle. Aloka's teacher at the temple had taught him to do this whenever he got over- excited. Now he felt calm and at peace.

What Aloka did not know was that he and the family were in terrible danger. A band of robbers had spied the family's camp fire from afar and quietly made their way through the jungle. Now they were hiding behind a boulder, watching Aloka and the sleeping family.

"Look at that family all fast asleep," whispered their leader, Cha. "It'd be easy to steal from them."

"Yes, and they're just back from market from the looks of it," said his deputy, Jao. "Look at all those bundles of cloth."

The family all slept on peacefully. Now Aloka spied the robbers, but he decided to remain calm, as he'd been taught. "It'll do no good if I panic," he thought to himself. "I'll try to control my fear." He

continued to walk slowly back and forth under the tree, practising concentration.

"That man pacing there must be on guard," said Bahn, the third robber. "Let's wait until he falls asleep."

"And then we can tie up the adults and take everything they own!" said Jao. "I've the ropes ready."

The robbers waited for Aloka to go to sleep. They waited and they waited, but Aloka continued to walk back and forth under the tree. One by one, Cha, Jao and Bahn fell into fitful sleep. Every now and then, one of them would stir and open his eyes. But when he saw that Aloka was still awake, each robber would fall asleep once more. Finally, when the sun rose in the sky, all three robbers woke up.

"That guard is still awake!" growled Cha. "And now it's daylight. It's too risky for us to try to rob them now. They'll wake up before we have a chance to tie them up."



The angry robbers fled through the jungle as the morning light flooded into the valley. Jao was so annoyed he forgot to take his ropes with him. The leader, Cha, couldn't resist calling out, "Hey, you lot, sleeping there without a care in the world! You were lucky this

time. Your guard who never sleeps saved you! You should reward him well."

Aloka watched them leave and at last stopped walking. He stretched his arms and legs and smiled quietly to himself. Soon everyone was up and bustling about preparing breakfast. Taai began gathering wood for a fire and found the trampled-down patch of ferns where the robbers had hidden. And then he discovered the ropes.

"Aloka, do you know how these got here?" asked Taai. He was concerned and confused.

"Oh yes, they belonged to the robbers who were watching our camp during the night. They left this morning," replied Aloka calmly.

"Robbers!" cried Taai. "Weren't you scared?"

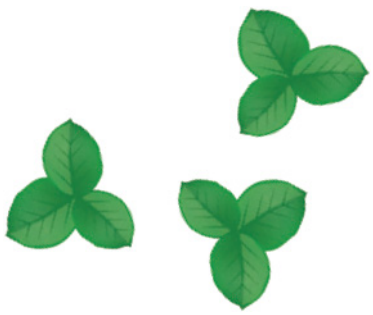
"No," said Aloka. "I felt very peaceful as I walked. I realized that robbers are only interested in rich people. I'd only my blanket and a calm mind and neither would be of interest to robbers. So why should I be afraid?"

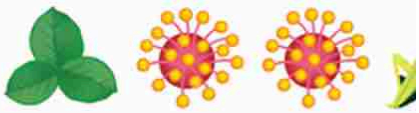
"You're very brave," said Taai. "Because you remained calm in the face of danger, danger passed us all by."

The family walked with Aloka back to his village. When they reached Aloka's home, Taai met Aloka's father and bowed to him. He told him the story of the robbers.

"Your son is the wisest young man I know," Taai said. "You should be very proud."

Aloka's father smiled and nodded. "I am," he said.





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HEART AND MIND.





THE MONKEY THIEVES

Relax, close your eyes and picture a band of very naughty monkeys. Every night the monkeys would creep into the king's orchard and steal his delicious apricots, plums and peaches. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to their story.

The head gardener stood before the king in the great throne room of the palace. "I'm sorry, Your Majesty," he said. "We laid traps and nets but these monkeys are slippery devils. They got away again last night."

"We must try to solve this problem together," replied the king. "Remember, I don't want to hurt the monkeys, I just want to stop them eating my fruit."

There was silence in the throne room as all the king's staff thought hard. Finally Buttercup, the cook's daughter, came forward and

bowed to the king. “Your Majesty, doesn’t eating fruit make you fit and healthy?”

“Yes, I believe it does, Buttercup,” said the king.

“I like fruit, but I love cake,” Buttercup continued.

“But when I eat too much cake my tummy feels heavy and sometimes I even feel sleepy.”



“Yes, I also feel tired if I eat too much cake,” laughed the king, “but I don’t get your meaning.”

“If you could tempt the monkeys to eat a lot of cake, they would become sleepy. Then they wouldn’t be able to run so fast and they might be easier to catch,” explained Buttercup.

“And, Your Majesty,” added Basil, the son of the king’s shoemaker, “we’ve all noticed how vain these monkeys are. They love anything bright and sparkling, and they steal jewellery and bright clothing. I’ve seen them hang necklaces around their necks and bangles from their arms. I’ve even seen them trying on shoes!”

“That’s all very well,” said the king, “but I don’t see how that helps us to catch those rascals.”

“I can create the most beautiful pairs of sparkling high-heeled shoes that the monkeys won’t be able to resist,” Basil continued. If their tummies are full with cake and they are wearing high-heeled shoes they’ll never escape us.”

At first the king just laughed at these plans. But when the monkeys continued to steal his fruit for the next three nights in a row, he was ready to give anything a try.

He ordered his finest pastry chefs to create the most delicious array of cakes. The cooks spent an entire day whipping cream, mixing chocolate sauce and spinning sugar. By late afternoon they were ready to lay out an enormous, mouth-watering spread on a huge cake stand in the middle of the orchard. The stand groaned under the weight of cream-filled cupcakes, iced buns, chocolate sponges, cherry pies and apricot tarts. The wonderful aroma floated over the orchard.

Meanwhile Basil was creating the most beautiful monkey shoes that had ever been seen. When they were finished he hung them from the branches of the trees in the orchard. The trap was set. The King's guards hid among the trees and waited.

As afternoon wore on toward evening, the monkey thieves crept through the trees.

"Mmm, what is that delicious smell?" asked Snout.

"It's cake! I love cake!" cheered Lugs and Peeper.

"Stay still," hissed Wit. "This could be a trap. We should leave and come back another time."

"We don't like it either! It all feels a bit suspicious," said Gob and Peck. But no-one made a move to leave. Everyone was too busy staring at the cream cakes and tarts. The more they looked at the yummy delicacies, the harder it was to believe in any trap. The smell was intoxicating.

The monkeys' mouths began to water and their bellies rumbled.

"I'll take a closer look," volunteered Snout, and ran off to the cake-laden stand. He broke off a small piece of cake and slipped it tentatively into his mouth. It melted on his tongue.

“Heaven,” he murmured. Looking up into the trees he saw dozens of pairs of dazzling shoes sparkling like stars.

“Ah, how beautiful,” he gasped. He reached up with his long arms and unhooked a pair of gold twinkly platform shoes from a branch. Snout had completely forgotten about the possible danger and the others waiting for him.

At the edge of the orchard, Wit, Peeper, Peck, Lugs, Gob, Nit and Bruno were bickering.



“So what if it’s a trap? It doesn’t matter – no trap can hold us for long!” said Gob arrogantly.

“I’m worried. Snout hasn’t come back!” said Nit.

“Snout’s probably stuffing his face with cake and leaving none for us,” said Bruno.

At these words the monkeys threw caution to the wind. They found Snout parading around the orchard in golden shoes eating a big piece of pie. A mad scramble ensued as they fought for the most beautiful shoes and stuffed handfuls of cake into their mouths.

The monkeys ate all the delicacies, every single crumb. What a sight they were, faces covered with icing and tummies bloated with cake as they staggered around trying on glittery shoes. They were soon feeling so tired and full that, one by one, they lay down and fell fast asleep.

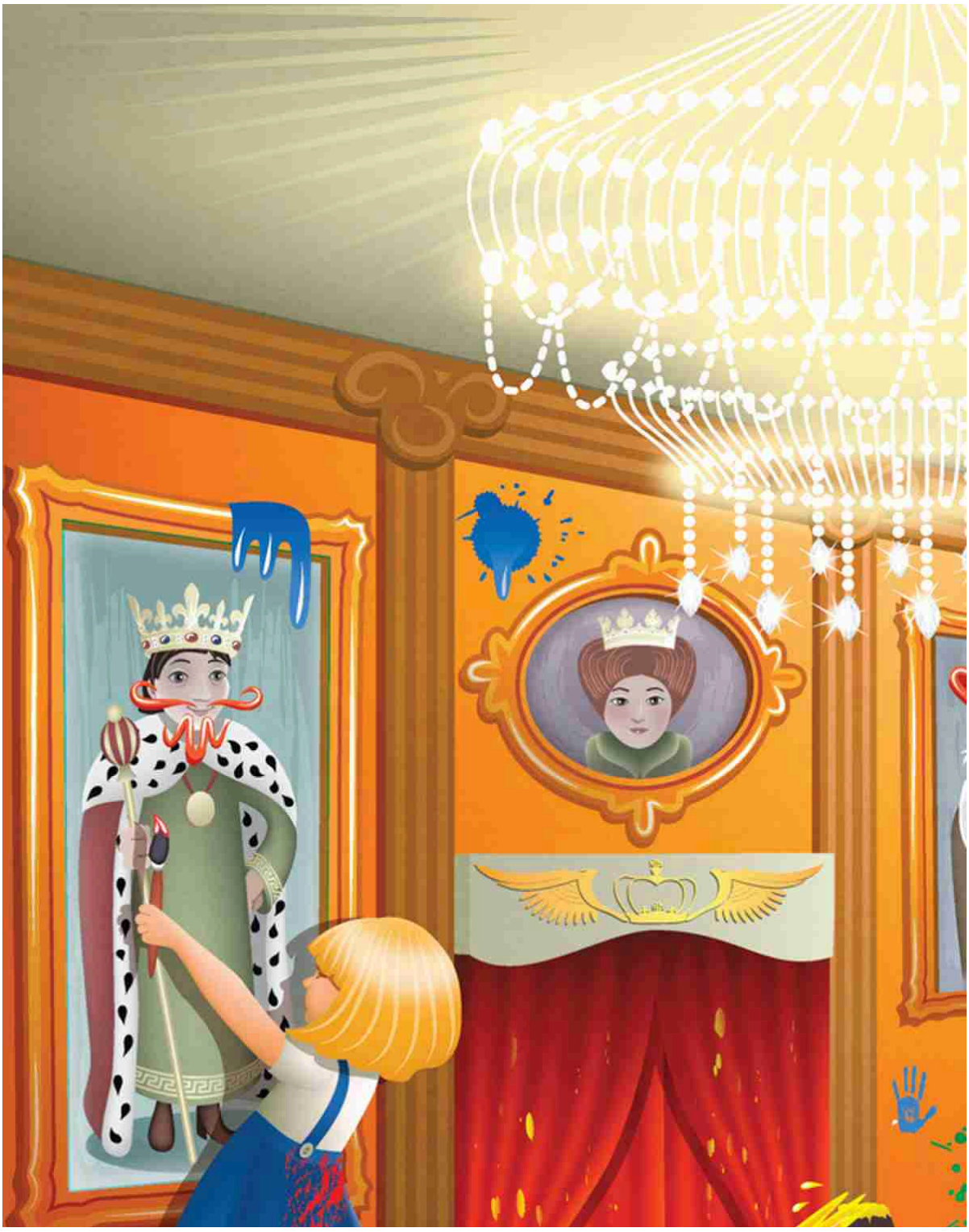
The guards now crept up very quietly and pounced. The monkeys awoke in a panic. They'd no chance of escape. They were too full and heavy with rich food and couldn't run in their high-heeled shoes. It took no time at all for the guards to catch all of them in their nets. The king had the monkeys placed in his private zoo, but as soon as they came back to their senses they worked out how to escape.

From that day on they stayed in their forest home. Wit spoke for them all when he said: "We've plenty of food in the forest and no need of silly high-heels. Let's stay happy and safe just where we are."





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ANGELICA AND KING FREDERICK

Relax, close your eyes and imagine yourself in an enormous castle. Its thick, stone walls and impressive high towers are surrounded by a great moat. This was the home of King Frederick and Queen Veronica, who were both so busy looking after their kingdom that they didn't have much time for their five children. King Frederick even called his children by numbers rather than by their names because he said it was quicker that way. The royal children were the naughtiest in the land, but one day everything changed. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to their story.

One day the king's children had been even naughtier than usual. They'd teased the royal hunting dogs and dressed up in the chief judge's finest robes. King Frederick was so angry he ordered his guards to keep the children in their bedrooms as punishment. That night he and the queen left the castle for a magnificent ball at a neighbouring duke's palace.



The children waited until their guards had fallen asleep. Then they ran through the castle looking for mischief. At last they reached the picture gallery, which held the portraits of all their royal ancestors. The king was very proud of the gallery and especially loved his own portrait. The queen had ordered the gallery to be repainted and there were lots of paint tins lying around on the floor.

“Who feels like painting?” asked Number 1, the king’s eldest daughter, picking up a can of red paint.

She climbed onto a chair, reached up, and painted a red beard and moustache onto her father’s portrait. The other children fell about laughing.

“Me next!” cried Number 3.

The children screamed with delight as each tried to outdo the other in painting silly hairstyles and faces on the portraits. Next, they had a paint fight and the whole gallery was spattered in bright colours. Finally they grew tired.

Deciding it was time for bed, they crept back to their room.

The king and queen returned from the ball after midnight.

“My dear,” said King Frederick to the queen, “I’ll take a quick look at the picture gallery. I do like to see the family all together there on the wall. It helps me sleep soundly.”

When the king saw the state of the gallery, he shouted with fury. “Guards! Who’s done this?”

The guards knew the royal children were probably to blame. But they also knew they would be in trouble for failing to keep the children in their rooms.

“It must have been village children, Your Majesty,” lied the chief guard. “You can see a child’s handprints on the walls.”

“Bring all the village children here!” ordered King Frederick. “I don’t care if it’s the middle of the night.”

Soon the picture gallery was full of sleepy children and their worried parents.

“Who did this?” King Frederick demanded, pointing around him at the terrible mess. Nobody said a word.

“If no-one owns up I will punish all the children,” he threatened, but still no-one moved.

King Frederick was furious that nobody had confessed. “Guards, lock up all the children!” he cried.

The guards looked guiltily at each other but they were too frightened to say anything. They started separating the village children from their parents.

A small girl called Angelica left her mother’s side. She lightly pulled on the king’s robe to get his attention.

“Your Majesty,” she said, smiling up at his angry red face, “is it fair that the innocent children have to be punished for the actions of a few guilty ones?”

“What?” cried King Frederick. He wasn’t used to his orders being questioned. The room fell silent.

“I don’t want you to be known as a cruel and unjust king,” said Angelica gently.

“If the guilty children won’t own up, then all the children must be punished,” said King Frederick firmly.

“Does that include your own children?” asked Angelica.

“Of course not, only the village children,” replied the king.

“Surely ‘all children’ must mean *all* children,” said the girl.

“The child’s right,” shouted one of the parents.

“The king’s unfair,” shouted another.

The king was worried. He looked at Angelica.

“What should I do, child?” he asked.



Angelica thought for a moment. Then she said, “Please bring all the children who live in the castle here.”

All the castle’s children, including the royal children, were lined up in a row. Angelica looked carefully at them. “I’m sorry to inform you, Your Majesty,” she said, “that it’s your own family who are guilty.”

“You accuse my children!” cried the king. “Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, come here!”

The royal children looked sweet in their white pyjamas, but Angelica asked to see the palms of their hands. The hands of Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 were all scrubbed clean. But Number 5, the youngest boy, hadn't removed all the paint from his nails and there was blue paint in his hair.

"My own children, how could you behave in such a way?" cried the king. He turned to Angelica and shook her by the hand. "You've saved me from making a fool of myself. Thank you. But how did you know who was responsible?"



"I didn't at first," said Angelica, "but I did know it couldn't have been the village children. You see, the castle walls are so high and so thick and no-one can swim across the moat."

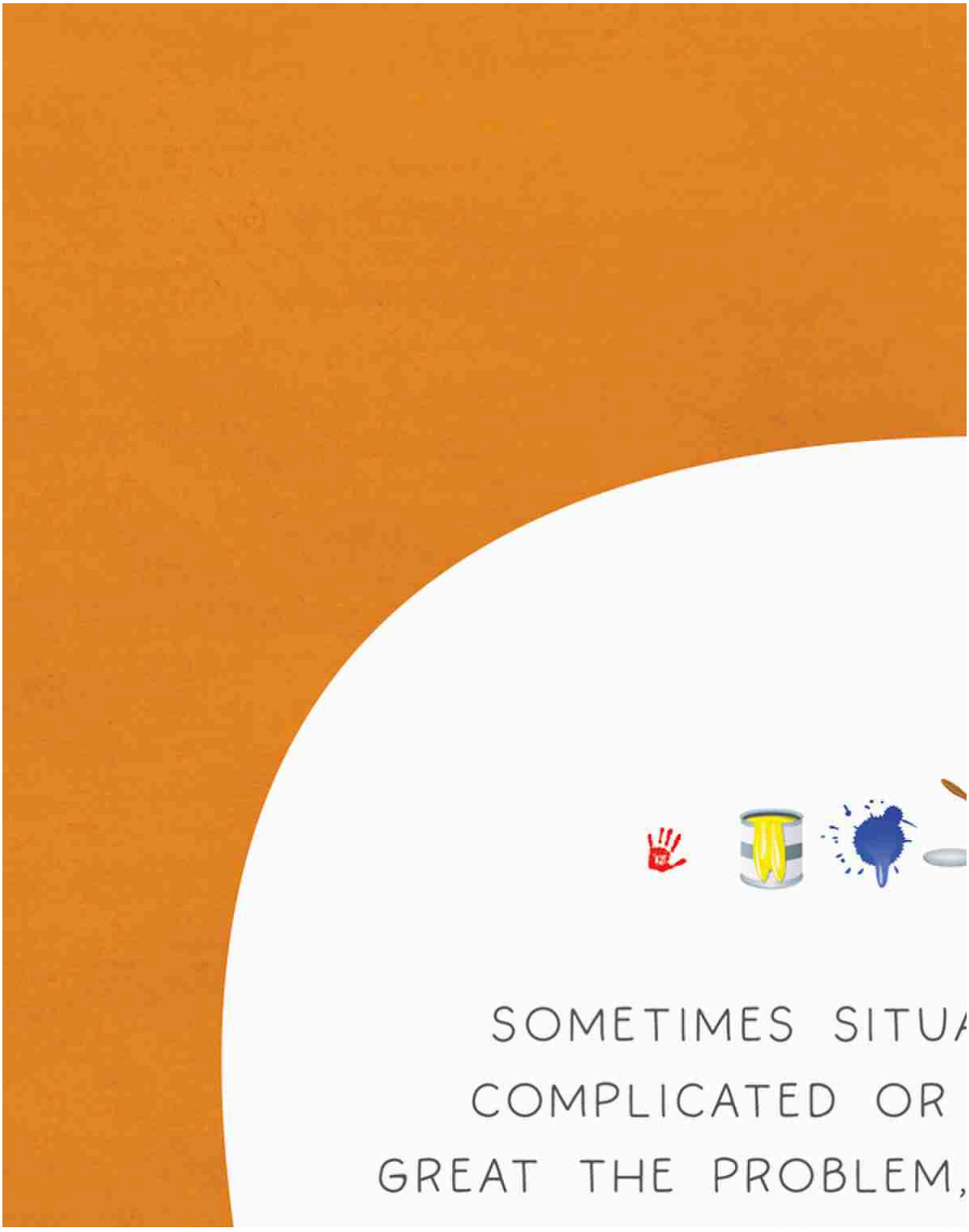
The king nodded thoughtfully. Then he asked Angelica, "How do you think I should punish my children?"

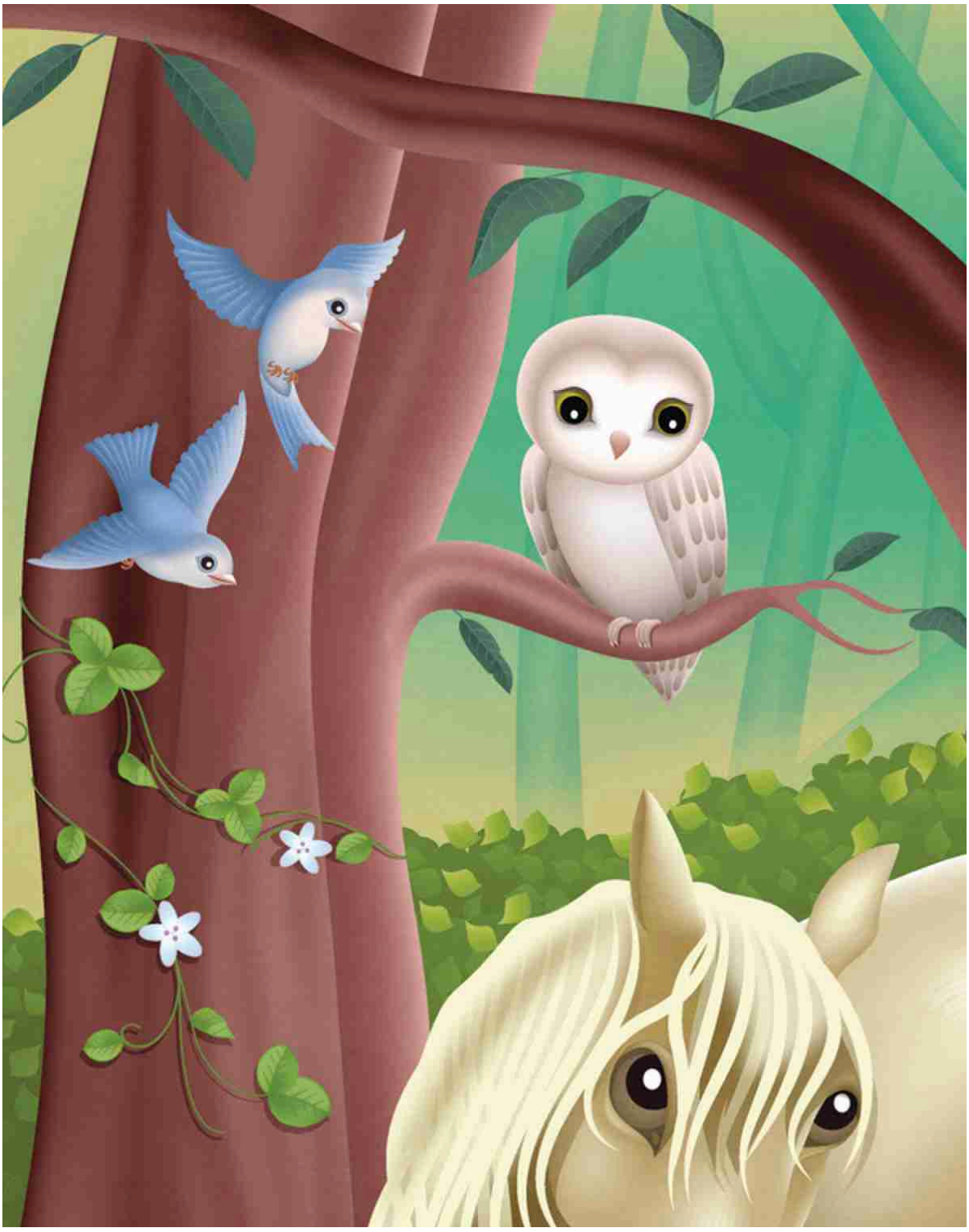
"Instead of punishing them, spend time with them." said Angelica. "They wouldn't be so naughty if they had more attention from you.

And why not call them by their names? Nobody likes to be called a number."

King Frederick shook his head in amazement. He said, "You are an extraordinary and surprising little girl."

Angelica just smiled.


SOMETIMES SITUA
COMPLICATED OR
GREAT THE PROBLEM,





THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE

Relax, close your eyes and picture yourself in the middle of lush grassland. This is the home of a herd of wild horses that roamed free across the plains. Our tale is about one of these horses, a beautiful young filly called Dawn. Dawn's coat was the colour of snow and was so pure and bright that she could even be seen at night. Word spread quickly about this magnificent horse and even reached the ears of the king himself. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to her story.

"I want you to capture this white horse and bring it to me," King Claude said to his guards. "It's only fitting that a handsome man like me should own such a beautiful filly."

It was an easy ride from the palace to the plains and the guards soon spied Dawn drinking her fill at the edge of a lake. They galloped toward her and threw a rope around her neck. The more

Dawn struggled, the tighter the rope grew. At last she knew she was caught and the guards led her back to the palace.

The king's courtiers crowded around Dawn, pushing and pulling to get a good look at her. Her neck was sore from the bite of the rope and the terrified creature shook from her mane to her hooves. The king shooed the courtiers aside and stood in front of Dawn.

"You belong to me now. I'm your king and master," he said in a loud, harsh voice that hurt Dawn's ears. She longed to be back running free on the plains where the only sounds were the wind in the grass and the call of birds.

Dawn was shut up in a pen in the stable block. Boris, the stable boy, was a bully. He took great delight in frightening Dawn and prodded her with a broom handle, just for fun.

"I'm in charge of you now, so you'd better behave," Boris warned Dawn. He yanked the rope around her neck hard to make his point.

The king wanted to ride his beautiful white horse through the streets of his city so he could show her off to his people.

"You must train this horse so that she's safe for me to ride," he said to Boris. "If you do a good job I shall reward you with a gold coin."

Boris was greedy and straightaway set about training Dawn. He tried to put a saddle on her back, but she reared up on her hind legs and neighed in fear. The more Boris approached Dawn, the more scared and desperate she grew.

Boris was losing his temper. He picked up a broom and ran toward the horse, as if to strike her. In a wild frenzy Dawn reared up, then dashed as fast she could across the yard. She leaped over the gate and kept on galloping and didn't stop, even when she reached a great forest. Still frightened, she pushed on hard through the trees and bushes.



Dawn was safe now. She was deep in the forest where there were no buildings or roads or paths of any kind and she couldn't be found by the king or his guards. But Dawn did not feel safe. She jumped in fear every time the wind rustled through the leaves or a twig snapped under her hoof – she thought the king's guards had come for her.

A wise old squirrel called Sam sat high in a tree nibbling nuts. He watched the frightened horse paw the ground, twitch her ears and roll her eyes at the slightest sound. It made him sad to see how nervous and upset she was.



“I must help her,” Sam said to himself, and he climbed down a branch towards Dawn.

“Hello,” said Sam, as gently as he could, as Dawn shook her head in terror. “I don’t mean to startle you. I only want to talk to you.”

Dawn was calmed by Sam’s kind voice. She told the old squirrel all that had happened to her.

“I’m very sorry about what happened,” said Sam, smiling gently at Dawn. “I can understand how frightened you must have been. The king and his men treated you cruelly. But that’s all in the past now. You’re safe here and there’s no-one who can harm you.”

Dawn stopped pawing the ground and listened carefully.

“There’s nothing to be frightened of here in the forest,” Sam went on. “No humans ever come here. They can’t make their way through the thorny bushes and tangled trees. There are only us animals – mice and snails and squirrels and birds – and we’re all rather shy ourselves.”

Dawn's eyes had stopped rolling now.

"Look around, there's nothing to fear," repeated Sam. "It's just your mind, your own imagination that's frightening you. You're seeing things that are not there. Only your thoughts can scare you here. You just need to control your imagination and you can control your fear," said Sam.

Dawn slowly nodded her head and thought about the squirrel's kind and wise words. She looked around her and saw the trees of the forest and some friendly animals who smiled and winked at her. The king and his guards were a very long way away. She remembered how difficult it had been to make her way this deep into the forest. It would be harder still for humans.

Dawn knew Sam was right and she thanked him for his help. And she decided to follow his advice. From now on, she wouldn't let her imagination get the better of her.

Several days passed. Although Dawn was still nervous at times, gradually she became less afraid. When a noise startled her, she calmed herself by thinking through all the possible explanations.

"That's just the trees swaying in the wind," she told herself. Or, "That's just a twig cracking. It's probably Sam coming to visit me, or one of my other new friends."

Dawn used the power of her own mind to control her thoughts. Now, she was no longer led by her fear. Little by little she became happy once more and started to enjoy her new, peaceful life in the forest with her caring new friends.

And there was one friend whom she cherished above all – Sam, the wise squirrel, who'd taught her so much.





SOMETIMES WE'R
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DANAN AND THE SERPENT

Relax, close your eyes and imagine that you're walking through a dense jungle on a hot and humid day. This tale is about three children, called Keisho, Charini and Danan, whose forest adventure ended up being bigger than they had bargained for. Listen carefully to their story.

"Please can we go on a picnic!" pleaded the children.

"The forest can be a dangerous place," their mother said. "You must all take care. Keisho, you're the eldest and you must look after your sister and brother."

The delighted children set off through the forest. It was very hot and soon their clothes and hair were wet with sweat. They came to a rocky outcrop that cast a deliciously cool shadow and decided to rest there.

"You two set out the picnic, and I'll go to the pond we passed and get some fresh water," said Keisho.

But when he reached the pond, Keisho completely forgot about fetching drinking water. The pond sparkled and glistened and looked very inviting.

“I’ll just go for a quick swim,” he said to himself. He took off his shirt and waded in.

Suddenly the water began to churn and froth. Keisho gasped in fear as a great serpent rose up from the depths. The serpent’s skin was slimy with weeds and its red eyes glared. “Mmm, do I smell lunch?” it hissed.

“Please great serpent, don’t eat me,” cried Keisho.

“Maybe I will, and maybe I won’t,” teased the serpent. “If you can answer my question I’ll let you go.” He smiled at Keisho with all his yellow fangs.

Keisho gulped and nodded. “I’ll try.”

“Tell me this,” hissed the serpent. “What’s the wisest thing you’ve ever learned?”

Keisho frowned with concentration. Then he remembered the advice of his school teachers.

“The way to happiness is to study hard and get a good job,” he said.

“Wrong!” cried the serpent. He wrapped himself around Keisho and dragged him deep under water and through a dark tunnel. Just as Keisho thought his lungs would explode, they burst through the water and into a cave. High up on the cave wall was a small hole that let in sunlight and fresh air. Keisho found that he could breathe.

“Welcome to my larder,” hissed the serpent. “I’ll keep you nice and dry here until I’m ready to eat you.”

Charini and Danan were wondering where Keisho was.

“You know what he’s like. He probably got distracted,” said Charini. She didn’t want to frighten her little brother. “You wait here

and I'll go and see what's keeping him."

But when Charini reached the pond, she forgot all about Keisho. All she had eyes for was the beautiful blue water glittering in the sunlight. "Oh, I'm so hot. I'll just wade in for a moment to cool down," she said to herself.

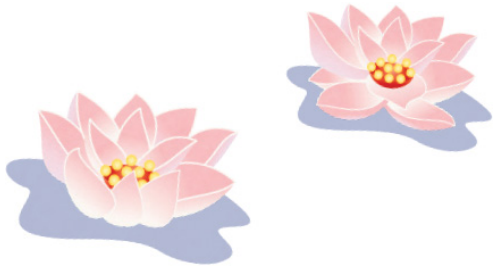
As soon as her feet entered the water, the serpent rose from the depths. Charini screamed in fright.

"Mmm, I've got my lunch waiting in my larder, but is this my dinner I smell?" The serpent flicked out his long tongue.

"What have you done with my brother?" cried Charini.

"That's for me to know and for you to find out," said the serpent. "Now, answer me this question and I'll let you go. I might even tell you where your brother is as well."

Charini nodded silently.



"Tell me this," said the serpent. "What's the wisest thing you've ever learned?"

Charini thought about the advice her teachers had given her. "Good little girls should be seen and not heard if they want to be happy," she said.

"Wrong!" cried the serpent. He dragged Charini beneath the water and locked her in the larder with Keisho.

When Charini didn't return, Danan set off to look for his sister and brother. Beside the pond, he saw two sets of footprints going into the

water – but none coming out.

The serpent was watching the little boy and saw that Danan stopped at the pond's edge and did not enter the water. "Let's see how clever this young one really is," the serpent thought. He used his powerful magic to give himself the appearance of a woodcutter, then came up to Danan.

"Young friend," the serpent in disguise said, "you look hot and tired. Why not refresh yourself in the cool water?"

Danan always trusted his instincts and something about the woodcutter was not right. "Who are you and what have you done with my brother and sister?" Danan shouted.

The serpent laughed and dropped his disguise. He slithered back into the water. "They waded into my pond. I asked them a simple question that they couldn't answer, so now they are mine. Would you like to try to answer it?"

"If I get the answer right will you set them free?" asked Danan.

"Very well," said the serpent. "Tell me: what's the wisest thing you've ever learned?"

Danan thought for some time.

"Well?" said the serpent. "I don't have all day. I have lunch to prepare."

Danan couldn't think at all when he was anxious. So he took a deep breath and did his best to relax. He recalled sitting on his father's knee as a very young child. What was it his father had said? Then he remembered.

"Don't harm yourself or others and be kind to everyone; then you'll have a good life," said Danan.

"Well done," said the serpent. "You've shown great wisdom. I'll release your brother and sister." He dived into the pond and brought Keisho and Charini to the surface.

The serpent called out, “To be truly wise, you must put into practice these wise words; otherwise they are meaningless.” With this, he disappeared.

The three children hugged each other in great relief. From that day on they did their best to be kind to everyone they met. And whenever they were tempted to wade into a pond again, they always checked carefully for serpents first.





LIVING A WORTH
DOING OUR BEST
SHOWING GOODWIL





THE SPIRIT OF THE TREE

Relax, close your eyes and picture yourself riding a camel across a vast desert under a scorching sun. This tale is about a camel breeder called Big Tam and his son Goza. They were bringing a herd of camels to market when something very strange happened. Would you like to know what it was? Listen carefully to their story.

After travelling for many days, Big Tam and Goza reached the walls of the great city called Miraz. Outside the city gates grew an ancient tree with branches crooked like witches' fingers. People said that the tree had been there longer than the city, protected by a

powerful spirit. As the camel train passed by, Big Tam knelt before the old tree.

“Oh wondrous tree spirit, please help me make lots of money selling camels today at the market. I promise a great offering to you in return,” said Big Tam. He walked round the tree three times, bowing and clapping.

“What are you doing, Dad?” asked Goza. He thought his father’s behaviour was a bit odd.

“I’m asking the tree spirit to bless us with good luck at the market today,” said Big Tam.

“My school teacher says that asking spirits for help is silly. She says you make your own luck,” said Goza.

They passed through the city gates. Secretly, Big Tam rubbed the lucky coin he kept in his pocket and whispered, “Help us, little coin.” He made sure his son didn’t see.

The market square bustled with people from many lands, the stalls piled high with fruit and vegetables, jewellery, pottery and carpets. Big Tam set to work, haggling with the camel buyers. By late afternoon all his camels had been sold.

“Our luck was in, my boy,” said Big Tam, grinning. “Now let’s go home.” But, as they left the city, he stopped to buy two goats. When they reached the old tree, he knelt down, grasping the goats, and pulled a knife from his belt.

“What are you going to do, Dad?” Goza cried out in fear.

“I’m going to sacrifice these goats to the tree spirit. I’m giving thanks for our good luck today at the market.”

“Oh no, don’t do that!” cried Goza. “Don’t hurt them!” As he spoke, something incredible happened. Rain fell from the branches and turned to mist, and from the mist floated the figure of a woman. Her hair streamed around her and her robes sparkled like diamonds.

Big Tam dropped his knife. “Who are you?” he gasped.

“I’m the spirit of this tree. That wasn’t rain, but my tears for these poor frightened animals. Your good luck, as you call it, at the market today was only due to your own hard work. You should listen to your son!”

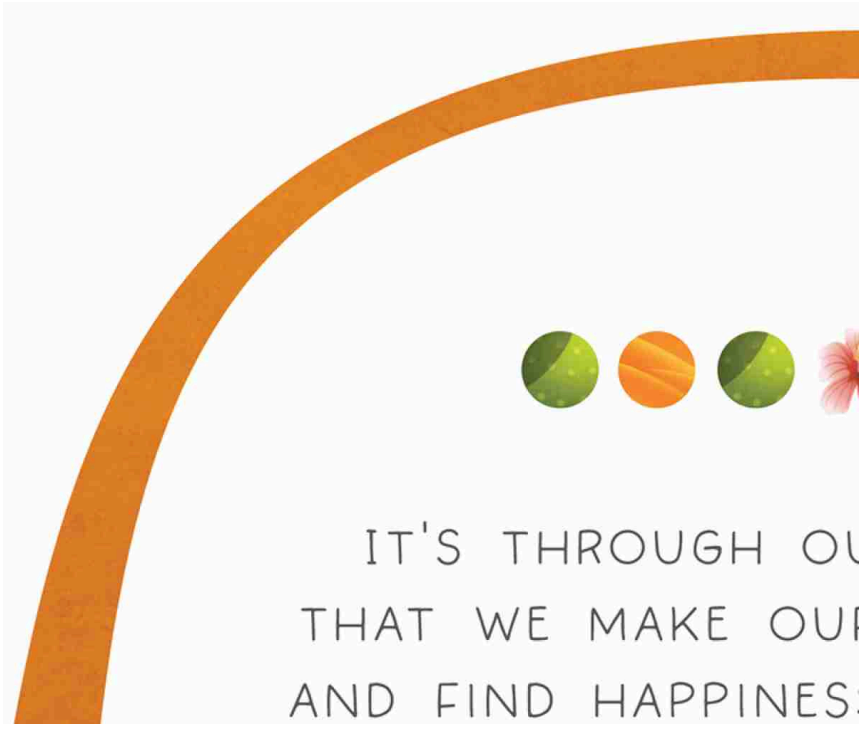
Big Tam was beginning to feel rather silly kneeling before the tree spirit. He stood up awkwardly and blushed.



“Spirits nurture all that lives,” she continued. “We don’t waste our time helping humans bargain at the market.” She smiled before disappearing back into the tree.

Big Tam and Goza stood staring at the spot where she had floated. “Here’s a present for you,” declared Big Tam at last, giving his ‘lucky’ coin to Goza. “Buy something special with it. I won’t be needing it any longer.”

From that day on, Big Tam and Goza worked hard together to make their own good fortune.


IT'S THROUGH OU
THAT WE MAKE OUI
AND FIND HAPPINES





EGBERT AND THE FISHERMAN

Relax, close your eyes and imagine a duke's son, Egbert, who thought he was the most important person in the world. Egbert believed he could be as rude as he liked and order everyone about – until a kindly fisherman taught him an important lesson. Listen carefully to his story.

One morning Egbert was being carried around the palace in a sedan chair by his servants, Benson and Merriweather. It wasn't that Egbert couldn't walk – he was very lazy and didn't like to do anything for himself.

"I want to go boating," Egbert said to Benson.

"But, Master Egbert, there's a storm coming!" stuttered Benson. He was scared – he knew Egbert didn't like it when people said no to him.

"I don't care, I'm the duke's son and I want to go boating right NOW!" shouted Egbert.

Benson and Merriweather, puffing and panting, carried Egbert and his sedan chair down the one hundred and eight steps of the palace,

out of the gate and toward the sea.

“Watch it, you’re bumping me,” complained Egbert.

The two exhausted servants hauled Egbert along the rocky road to the harbour. Egbert moaned and groaned, then demanded to be carried faster. Merriweather finally lost his temper. He gave the sedan chair an almighty push and Benson dropped it, too. “I’ve had enough of you and your wicked tongue!” Merriweather cried.

Egbert and the chair rolled down the hill, out of control. Sorry that he’d lost his temper, Merriweather ran with Benson after Egbert, but they couldn’t stop him plopping into the sea with a great splash. Clinging to the chair, Egbert bobbed up and down in the water.

Just then the storm arrived. Lightning flashed across the sky and the waves were whipped high by the wind. Egbert had never been so frightened.

“Help!” he cried. “Please, somebody, help me!”

Ayo was a fisherman who’d also been caught by the storm. But he was very experienced and very calm. He’d hauled in his sail and was patiently waiting for the storm to pass. He spun his ship hard in the direction of Egbert’s cries.

Another flash of lightning lit up Egbert clinging to his sedan chair in the sea. Ayo thought quickly. “I’ll haul him in with my fishing net,” he said to the pet parrot who kept him company. Ayo threw out his net, caught Egbert first time and pulled him aboard.

Egbert lay on the deck, feeling very sorry for himself.

“You’re a strange-looking fish!” chuckled Ayo.

“How disrespectful. I’m a duke’s son! How dare he laugh,” thought Egbert furiously. But he said nothing. He was frightened of this man with his tattoos and eye-patch.

“Come on,” said Ayo, ruffling Egbert’s hair. “We’ll get you dried off and get some warm soup in you.”



Egbert was red-hot with anger. “How dare he touch me with his great peasant hands,” he thought.

The storm passed and Ayo sailed safely into port. Egbert pretended to be grateful. He tried to smile, but it hurt his face as he wasn’t used to smiling. He said, “Thank you,” but felt sick speaking that unfamiliar word out loud.

To Ayo’s face he said: “When I’m made duke I will reward you most generously.” But under his breath Egbert added “As if ...!”

When Egbert returned to the palace he bragged that he had saved himself using his brainpower and his excellent swimming. But everyone knew that Egbert never bothered to use his brain, and what’s more never did any exercise. “He doesn’t even walk anywhere, let alone swim,” they said.

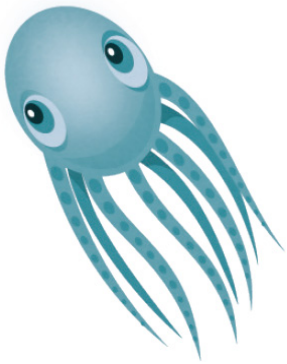
The following year Ayo was sailing near the duke’s harbour. “Perhaps I’ll pay a visit to my young friend,” Ayo said to his parrot. “Let’s see how he’s getting along.”

Egbert’s father had died and Egbert was now the duke. The morning that Ayo decided to visit, Egbert was lying under a big red canopy on the palace terrace having his toes massaged. He spied the great hulk of Ayo coming up the hill.

“Aha, that disrespectful oaf is back, looking for handouts,” he thought. “I must get rid of him before he tells anyone he rescued me.” Egbert shouted to his guards: “Arrest that man! He’s a thief and a thug. Throw him in the dungeon.”

Egbert's bodyguards didn't dare challenge him. They arrested Ayo, bound his hands and took him to the dungeon.

It was market day in the city square. Traders were selling fruit and vegetables, spices and fresh fish. Paolo the grocer spied his friend Ayo being led away in chains and demanded to know where the guards were taking him.



"He is being sent to the dungeons. He's a thug and a thief," replied the chief guard.

"Nonsense," exclaimed Paolo. "I know this man and he's a decent and honest fellow."

A crowd gathered and several others recognized Ayo.

Mario the spice trader said: "He's the kindest man I know."

Nino the goldsmith said: "Ayo helps everyone he can."

And Claude the fishmonger said: "I'd trust Ayo with my life. What's more, I know that Ayo saved Duke Egbert's life." Then Claude told the gathering crowd the whole story.

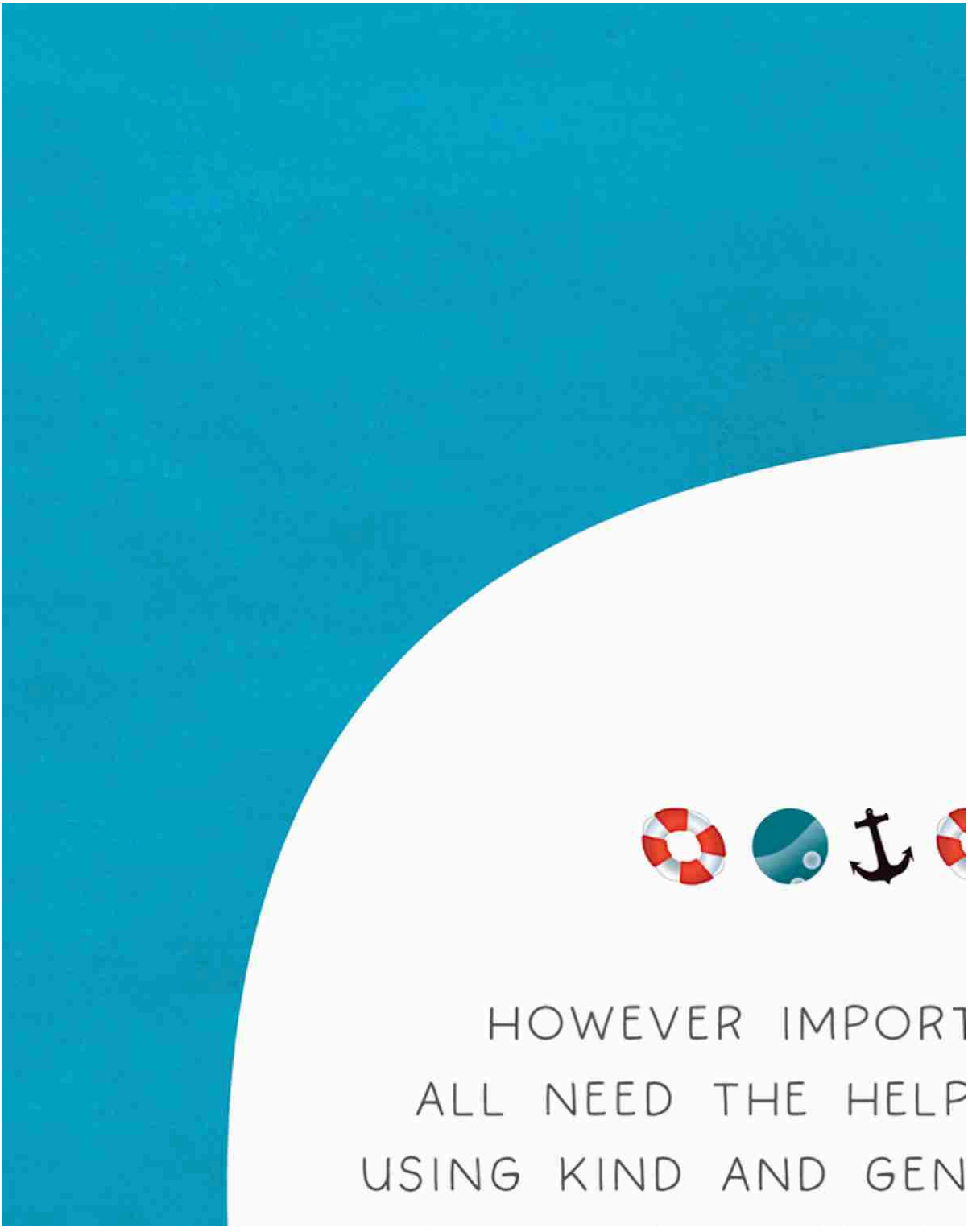
"Egbert is ungrateful and a liar," the people cried. The angry crowd ran to the palace demanding justice.

"Down with Egbert! Ayo for chief minister!" they cried. Ashamed and frightened, Egbert didn't know what to do.

"Let Ayo decide on Egbert's punishment," said Paolo.

Ayo thought for a while. Then he said, “Egbert should be a fisherman for one year and one day. I can’t think of a better way of teaching him patience and humility.”

After a year and a day as a poor fisherman, Egbert had learned the value of helping people and was grateful when people helped him in turn. He became kind and generous and relied on Ayo as his wise counsellor. The people of the dukedom agreed they had the best ruler in the land.


HOWEVER IMPORT
ALL NEED THE HELP
USING KIND AND GEN





AMRITA AND THE ELEPHANTS

Relax, close your eyes and picture a little Indian girl called Amrita who was always worrying. One day she worried so much she managed to frighten not just herself but her entire village. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to her story.

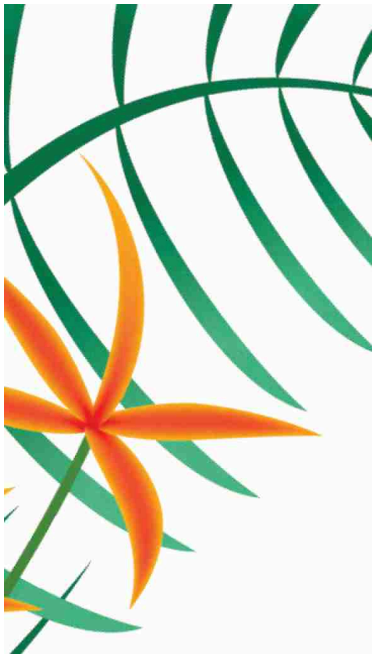
It was a lovely sunny afternoon and Amrita was sitting under a tree at the edge of the forest. Birds twittered in the branches and fluffy white clouds sailed across the sky.

“I don’t like the look of those clouds,” Amrita was thinking to herself. “It’s sunny now, but what if it starts to rain? I’ll be completely soaked by the time I get home.”

Amrita began to wring her hands. “And what if it rains and rains and there’s a flood? Everything will be washed away – the farms, the animals and the village, too!”

Just at that moment the ground began to shake, there was an almighty crash, and a wave of dust rolled through the trees toward her. Birds flew from the branches into the sky, squawking in alarm.

“What could that be?” Amrita cried out. “It must be an earthquake! Nothing else could make that much noise!” She scrambled to her feet in terror.



“I must run away,” she told herself. “I must run for my life!”

Amrita didn’t wait to see what was happening in the forest. If she had, she would have seen a group of young elephants playing chase among the trees. Even though they were only young, the elephants were still very large and very heavy – and the ground shook beneath their feet.

Amrita ran away from the trees and up to the village. She ran right past her two friends Tylanni and Gomin, who were racing their bikes along the street.

“What’s wrong, Amrita?” they called out.

“The world’s ending,” cried Amrita, who kept on running.

“What do you mean, the world’s ending?” asked Tylanni, frightened already. She and Gomin chased after Amrita.

“There was a great earthquake! I saw trees crashing to the ground! Our village will be destroyed!” cried Amrita.

The children shrieked. As they hurried through the village, everyone they met grew afraid as well.

“What’s wrong?” people asked. “What’s happened?”

“It’s the end of the world,” Amrita called out breathlessly.

Word spread through the village that the world was ending. A crowd of frightened children and adults were soon running in panic, looking for somewhere to hide. The donkeys, horses, cows, pigs, cats and dogs were all running, too. Everyone was following Amrita.

Ashoka, Amrita’s father, saw his daughter charging up the hill toward their house, followed by a huge crowd.

He put his hands up and shouted very loudly, “Stop!”

“Daddy, the world’s ending!” cried Amrita.

“It’s an earthquake,” shouted Eila, the mechanic.

“No, I heard it was a tornado,” yelled Akash, the postman.

“You’re both wrong. The moon is falling out of the sky,” cried Deepa, the baker.

Donkeys brayed, dogs barked, cats meowed and pigs squealed. The crowd stopped running and fell into arguing about how the world was ending.



Ashoka lifted his daughter up into his arms. She felt safe there and began to calm down. Ashoka asked the crowd, “Why are you so frightened?”

“There was an earthquake,” answered Rahul, the farmer.

“Who felt the earthquake?” asked Ashoka.

“My friend Chiko told me,” said Rahul.

“I was told by Gomin and Tylanni,” said Chiko.

“Gomin and Tylanni, what did you see?” asked Ashoka.

“Oh, we didn’t see anything, Amrita told us about it,” they explained.

“It’s true, Daddy, I felt the earthquake,” said Amrita.

“Tell me what happened,” said Ashoka.

“Well, I was sitting under a tree at the edge of the forest, when the earth began to shake and tremble. I heard trees crash behind me, and a huge wave of dust rolled over me. There were screams and

screeches from the animals. It was awful and really frightening.” As Amrita spoke, her voice began to quiver with fear again.

“All right, I think we should go and have a look in the forest,” said Ashoka.

“Oh no, Daddy, I’m too scared. We’ll be killed. We should get as far away as possible,” cried Amrita.



“You’ll be fine. I’ll keep you safe. You know I wouldn’t let anything happen to you,” said Ashoka gently to his daughter.

Ashoka carried Amrita back to the forest. The crowd followed cautiously at a distance.

As they got close Amrita cried out. “See, Daddy, the trees have fallen down! And listen to the animals!” She covered her eyes with her hands.

“Amrita, it’s okay. The world’s not ending,” said her father.

When Amrita opened her eyes she saw the young elephants chasing each other through the trees, trumpeting in excitement. As they crashed into the trees, the earth shook and clouds of dust rose from beneath their huge feet.

Ashoka turned to his daughter. “You frightened yourself,” he said. “The elephants are just playing. There was nothing to be afraid of, provided you didn’t get too close to them. Next time you feel frightened, take time to check what’s actually happening. Don’t rush to act before you have enough information.”

Amrita nodded her head slowly.

“You see, my daughter, how you have needlessly frightened yourself and the whole village? And this all happened through the

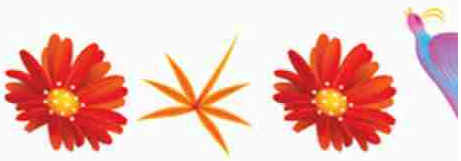
power of your mind."

Amrita bowed her head. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I'll try not to jump to conclusions in future."

Ashoka hugged his daughter. "All right, then, let's go home now." They turned and walked toward the village.

"So the world's not ending?" asked a latecomer as the crowd drifted away and people went back to their work.

"No, not today," laughed Amrita. "I made a mistake. It was all in my imagination."



THE MIND IS VER
JUMPING TO CONC
YOU INTO ALL SORT





THE LION AND THE BOAR

Relax, close your eyes, and picture yourself living deep in a jungle. This tale is about a rude boar called Benny, whose bragging got him into serious trouble. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to his story.

One morning Benny and some deer were taking a drink at a waterhole. As usual, Benny was talking about himself. “I lost my tusk in a fight with a ferocious tiger!” he said loudly.

The deer ignored him. Everyone agreed that Benny the Boar was a real bore! He was also a liar. They knew he’d caught his tusk on tree roots while foraging for mushrooms.

But Benny went on boasting: “See this scar on my hind leg? That’s from when I taught a crocodile a lesson!”

Just then a huge lion emerged from the trees. All the animals fell silent, even Benny. All you could hear was the “sip, sip” of the thirsty lion, whose name was Rory. He finished his drink, wished the animals good morning and left.

Once Benny was sure the lion had gone he started to laugh loudly. “Ha! That silly lion was scared away by me!”

“Ssh! He’ll hear you,” said the deer. “Your foolish tongue is going to get you in trouble one of these days!”

“I’m the real king of the jungle!” gloated Benny. “Come and fight, you big, ugly scaredy-cat!”

Rory burst through the trees. His teeth were bared, his mane stood up on end and his tail twitched angrily. “You need a lesson in manners, you impudent boar!”

The deer scattered. Benny shook from snout to hoof.

“If I hadn’t had a big lunch I would sort you out right now. We’ll meet here tomorrow instead!” snarled Rory.

Rory disappeared and Benny slumped onto the ground. “What am I to do?” he wailed. He was very frightened. After much fruitless worrying, he fell asleep.

Next morning, a skunk called Peewee, mistaking Benny for a rock, climbed onto his head for some sunbathing. Benny woke with a start and wailed again: “Oh, what am I to do?”

Peewee fell startled to the ground. “A talking rock!” he laughed. “Excuse me, Mr Boar. Now, what’s the matter?”

Relieved to hear a kind voice, Benny told Peewee how he’d been rude to the lion. He also confessed all the lies he’d ever told. “I thought everyone would like me if I sounded important,” said Benny sadly. “But that didn’t seem to work.”

“You shouldn’t be rude to anyone, especially not a polite, noble lion like Rory,” said Peewee. “Now, I have an idea. It’s not a pleasant one, but it might sort out your problem.”

“I’ll do anything,” cried Benny.



“Sshh, calm down,” said Peewee. “I’ll give you a spray of skunk perfume.” He lifted his tail and sprayed Benny.

“Ugh!” cried Benny. “I stink!”

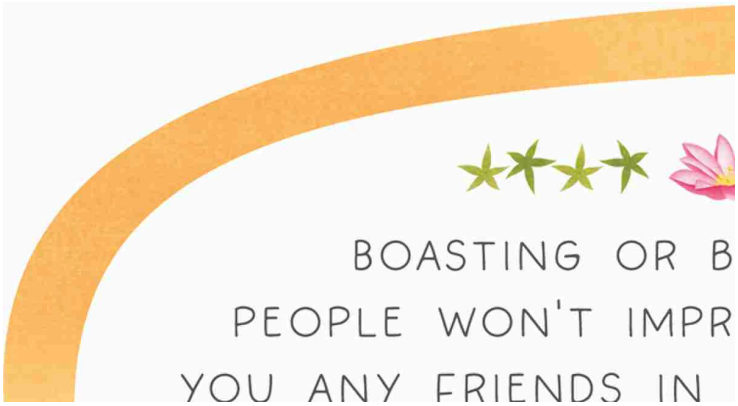
Just then Rory appeared. “EEEooww! What’s that terrible smell?” He covered his nose with his paws.

“It’s me. But can I say first I’m very sorry I was so rude,” said Benny, sincerely. “From now on if I haven’t got anything nice to say, I won’t say anything at all.”

Rory looked at Benny. At last he said, “I’ll not fight you today or any day. I couldn’t do anything worse to you than you’ve done to yourself.” He chuckled and left.

A relieved Benny jumped into the watering hole.

That night as the sun set, the two new friends, Benny and Peewee, kindly wished each other a good night’s sleep.


BOASTING OR B
PEOPLE WON'T IMPR
YOU ANY FRIENDS IN





TIM AND GRANDPA JOE

Relax, close your eyes and imagine that you're in the countryside, surrounded by rolling green hills and flower-filled meadows. This is where Tim lived. His grandpa, Joe, was a mailman and one day, when the mail van broke down, Grandpa Joe asked Tim if he could help him with the deliveries. And delivering the mail turned out to be full of adventure. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to their story.

The sun was rising as Grandpa Joe and a yawning young Tim set off on the morning mail round. Tim struggled a little under the weight of the mailbags. But he didn't complain. Grandpa Joe was so pleased to have his help.

“With the van at the garage, I couldn’t manage these bags all by myself,” said Grandpa Joe. “I’m getting older now, you know. And it will be nice to have your company, too. But tell me if the bags get too heavy, Tim.”

As the sun climbed higher into the sky, Grandpa Joe and Tim walked together along the winding country roads. After a while Tim started to feel tired and the mailbags seemed to get heavier with every step. He tried to distract himself from his discomfort by whistling. He didn’t want to let Grandpa Joe know he was struggling.

Just then they turned a bend and came upon a lamb caught in a prickly hedge. The lamb was very distressed and bleating in pain. Tim forgot all about his arms aching with the weight of the mailbags. He put the bags down and ran to the hedge as fast as he could, then he and Grandpa Joe worked to free the frightened lamb. The thorns scratched Tim’s arms and hands, but at last the lamb was free.

“We’d better try to find this lamb’s mother,” said Grandpa Joe.

“There are sheep in the next field,” said Tim excitedly as he looked over the fence. “Perhaps the mother isn’t far away.”

Gently holding the lamb, Tim climbed over the fence. He ran across the field to a stile and climbed into the next field. A sheep came up to him, bleating loudly. Tim put the lamb down and it skipped up to the sheep and nestled in close.

“That must be his mother,” called Grandpa Joe, smiling.

Tim rejoined Grandpa Joe in the road and they continued on their way.

“We helped that lamb, Grandpa,” said Tim.

“You did most of the hard work,” said Grandpa Joe, and he patted Tim on the back. “Well done.”



“The strangest thing is I don’t feel tired and my arms aren’t aching anymore,” Tim said to himself. He thought about how good it was to help others.

“When I grow up I’m going to help animals or people,” he promised himself. “I could be a vet or a doctor.”

The morning grew warmer. After a while, Tim began to feel the weight of the mailbags and the pain in his arms again. He began to feel sorry for himself and wished he had never agreed to help Grandpa Joe.

“I should have stayed at home. I could still be in bed or playing in the garden,” Tim thought.



The darker Tim’s thoughts grew, the heavier his load felt. All he could think about was getting rid of the bags he was carrying. Tim

even started to feel angry with Grandpa Joe for asking him to help with the deliveries. Tim was so caught up in his black thoughts that he didn't notice Grandpa Joe had led him off the road toward a farmhouse.

"Listen, Tim," said Grandpa Joe. "Someone's crying."

They found the farmer's wife, Mrs Brown, sitting in the middle of the farmyard, sobbing. Tim forgot his angry thoughts and together he and Grandpa Joe hurried over to find out what was wrong.

"I tripped and sprained my ankle. I can't get up, and the poor animals haven't been fed," cried Mrs Brown.

"Don't worry," said Grandpa Joe. "We'll help you."

In no time at all Grandpa Joe had got Mrs Brown up and helped her hobble back to the farmhouse. He sat her down in a chair and lifted her sprained ankle onto a footstool.

"That'll help reduce the swelling," he said.

Tim took care of all the animals. He scattered seed for the chickens that were scratching about in the yard, he gave the pigs food scraps from the kitchen, and he put fresh hay in the stables for the horses and the cows.

"You've done so much for me," said Mrs Brown. She pointed at a tray of chocolate muffins. "Please take some of those as a thank you. I baked them this morning."

Tim felt contented after helping Mrs Brown, just as he had after rescuing the lamb. He found that he had lots of energy and was no longer tired. "Perhaps I will become a teacher or a fireman when I grow up," he said to himself. "Helping people really is wonderful."

Grandpa Joe and Tim continued on their way. The hot sun blazed down and the dust on the road made Tim cough. He began to forget his happy thoughts again. He looked at the road stretching endlessly in front and thought to himself, "No-one is helping me. I've helped all

these people today but what have I got in return? I should just look after myself."

Tim's bags felt bigger and heavier than ever and his anger caused an ache in his heart.

But then he remembered Mrs Brown and the lamb. And he remembered how pleased his grandfather had been when he'd agreed to help him on the mail round. Every time he had helped people he'd felt warm and happy and the mailbags had seemed easier to carry. 'People have been helping me all day,' thought Tim.

He realized all he needed now was a rest and then he would be able to carry on. Nothing else was wrong.

"Grandpa Joe, I'm sorry but I'm feeling really tired. Could we sit down and have a rest?" asked Tim.

"Of course, Tim," said Grandpa Joe. "It's important to know when to stop. You've done really well today. It's not easy to carry these heavy bags such a long way."

They sat down and Grandpa Joe pulled out a flask of tea and they each ate one of Mrs Brown's muffins. And the muffin was the most delicious Tim had ever tasted.





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OUT OF PROPOR
ONLY FOCUS ON
WHEN WE TAKE





THE DESERT WILLOW

Relax, close your eyes and picture yourself standing in front of the most beautiful tree you have ever seen. It has graceful branches and long slender leaves and it's covered in pink flowers. The tree stands alone in a vast, parched desert. It's called the Desert Willow and it is home to two parrots, a colony of ants, a hive of bees and several hairy spiders. All the animals love the shade and protection of the willow and they all lived happily together until, one day, some unwelcome guests arrived. Would you like to know what happened? Listen carefully to their story.

It was midday. The sun hung shimmering in a cloudless blue sky. Hidden among the leaves of the willow rested the parrots, Priscilla and Percy. They dozed and dreamed of the cooler days to come. The ants and spiders rested, too, but the busy bees continued to work hard, gathering nectar from the lovely pink flowers.

In the distance a sandstorm rolled toward the willow. It blew in one direction across the desert and then another, all the time drawing closer to the tree. Suddenly the sandstorm hit the tree with all its force! The tree shook and woke the parrots from their nap. When the dust settled, three new animals who'd been swept up and carried along in the sandstorm were at the foot of the tree. There was a snake, a rat and a pig, and they were all very angry.



"My snout is sore," complained Pig.

"It's your own fault!" said Snake, sticking out his tongue at Pig. "You said we didn't need to take shelter."

"No, it's Rat's fault," retorted Pig. "He said he could navigate us safely through the sandstorm."

"I can see stars," said Rat, wobbling his head in a daze.

The startled parrots, bees, ants and spiders watched the visitors arguing below them.

After a while Rat, Snake and Pig stopped their bickering.

“I’m starving,” said Pig. He began snuffling around the roots of the tree with his snout, looking for food.

“Look around you. We’re in the middle of a desert. There’s nothing but dirt here!” said Rat.

“Ssh, listen, can you hear buzzing?” hissed Snake.

“Where there’s buzzing, there are bees,” said Rat.

“And where there are bees, there’s sure to be delicious, sweet honey!” said Pig.

The bees stopped their work on hearing these words. Frightened, they flew quickly to warn their queen, Sophia.

“What are we to do?” they asked her.

Sophia was very clever but she couldn’t think of any way to save their precious honey. She asked the ants, the parrots and the hairy spiders, but no-one knew what to do.

“We are no match for those large and clever animals,” said Thunder, the chief of the ants.







“Let’s think, what are our strengths?” asked Sophia.

“We ants are very small but very strong,” said Thunder.

“I’m afraid all we can do is spin webs,” said the spiders.

“Priscilla and I can mimic any sound we hear,” said Percy the parrot, in a voice that sounded very like Queen Sophia’s. At this everyone laughed and relaxed a little. Feeling calmer, Queen Sophia could think more clearly. She came up with an excellent idea, which she shared with them all.

Meanwhile Pig, Snake and Rat were making their plans to get the honey. “Snake, you climb onto the back of Pig, then I’ll climb up on top of you. From there I can reach a branch and lift myself into the tree,” said Rat.

Each animal did as Rat said. As Rat stretched up to reach a branch, he suddenly found that he was swaying.

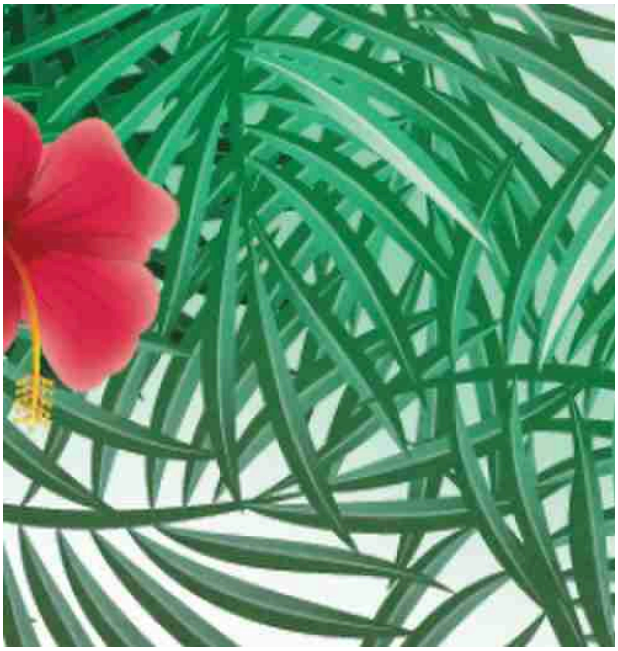
“Stay still, you silly Pig,” hissed Rat.

“Help! The ground is moving!” cried Pig.

Unseen by Pig, the tiny ants had crept underneath him. With their combined strength they lifted him away from the tree. As Pig scrambled back to solid ground, he, Snake and Rat all came tumbling down. The ants scattered, giggling.

Again, Pig, Snake and Rat tried to balance on each other’s backs. Again, the ants crept out from the willow’s roots and lifted Pig away. And again, he tumbled down in fright. But the third time Rat, Snake and Pig tried to climb into the tree, the ants were too exhausted to stop them.

Pig clung to his branch nervously. He wasn’t good at climbing and moved up very, very slowly.



Just above him, Percy and Priscilla, the parrots, were hiding on a branch. Percy hissed out loud in a voice that sounded like Snake's: "Hey, stupid Pig, get a move on."

"Lazy Pig!" cried Priscilla, sounding just like Rat.

"Who are you calling stupid and lazy?" grunted Pig. As he turned toward the voices, he lost his grip on the branch and fell out of the tree. "Ouch!" he cried.

Snake had climbed high up into the tree when a voice very like Rat's called out: "Quick, quick! Over here!" It was Percy, pretending to be Rat.

Snake slithered off in the direction of the voice and was caught in a large mass of sticky spider webs. He lost his balance and landed on Pig. They both lay dizzy on the ground.

Rat didn't care about Pig or Snake. "There'll be all the more honey for me," he said to himself. He climbed up to the beehive, his nose twitching with the smell of honey. But now Queen Sophia began to sing, and as she did so the bees swarmed before the hive. Rat was hypnotized by her buzzing and by the bees' ever-changing patterns.

“I feel so sleepy,” Rat yawned out loud. “I can’t seem to keep my eyes open.” He lost his grip on the branch and fell onto Pig and Snake on the ground below.

The tree began to shake with the buzzing of angry bees. They flew out of the tree in a great swarm toward the dazed trio, who picked themselves up and ran away as fast as they could. The bees chased them until they were sure that Pig, Snake and Rat could never find their way back.

“We may be small but together we’re very powerful,” said Queen Sophia, and all the animals cheered.



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THAT WE CAN







ANTONIO AND HIS TREASURE

Relax, close your eyes and imagine a long table piled high with gold pieces in the great hall of a palace. Counting the coins is the king's treasurer, a man called Antonio. He'd once been a generous man, but people said that counting gold had turned his heart cold and hard. Every night, after he had finished at the palace, Antonio would return to his house and count his own gold. But one day Antonio had a great fright that was to change him for ever. Listen carefully to his story.

It was a cold winter's evening as Antonio walked back to his house. He stopped by an inn and looked through the open window. "I would love a nice hot drink," he thought, "but I mustn't waste good money on such silly things."

As Antonio walked home through the snow, he grew colder and colder and more and more grumpy.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife Rosa when she saw him. "Your face is so long your jaw might hit the ground."

"I really want a hot fruit drink," Antonio replied moodily.

“Oh heavens, is that all?” Rosa exclaimed. “Why don’t I make a big jug of hot fruit punch and invite the neighbours around. We can have a little party,” she suggested hopefully.

“And who’ll be paying for this party?” asked Antonio.

Rosa sighed. “If you’re worried about the cost I’ll make just enough punch for our household,” she said.

“Are you suggesting we spend good money on the servants? That’s extravagant,” said Antonio.

“All right, I’ll make just enough punch for you, me and our children,” said Rosa.

Antonio thought for a moment. “The children are too young to appreciate it,” he said.

“What if I make just enough for you and me?” asked Rosa. She was getting fed up now.

Antonio’s jaw dropped. “Surely you don’t want any, do you?” he asked. “I’ll send a servant to the inn to buy me a tankard of fruit punch.” He carefully took one gold coin from his purse. When the servant returned Antonio grabbed the tankard and went straight upstairs to his bedroom. He climbed into bed and drank all the punch. Then he fell into a troubled sleep, upset about having spent a whole gold coin.

What Antonio didn’t know was that Dusty, a house sprite, had been watching all that had taken place. Dusty looked just like a person but he was as small as a mouse. He wore a brown tunic and a brown cap perched on his head.

“You’re a very greedy man,” said Dusty to the sleeping Antonio. “It’s time for you to learn about sharing!”



There was a puff of smoke, a sneeze and a hiccup, then the smoke cleared. Dusty the sprite was no longer there. In his place stood a second Antonio!



Dusty picked up Antonio's purse filled with gold coins. "Let's put this money to good use," he said. Then he let himself out of the bedroom and locked Antonio inside.

"Rosa, my turtle dove, where are you?" called Dusty in Antonio's voice. "I'm sorry for being so mean earlier. Let's have a party and invite all the neighbours."

"Oh, Antonio, that would make me so happy," said Rosa, amazed to see her husband smiling cheerfully. "But this is very unlike you.

Are you feeling quite well?”

“I’ve never felt better!” Dusty said with a smile. “I’ve turned over a new leaf.” Then the sprite took out Antonio’s purse. “Spend all this money on whatever you need.”

Rosa called all her friends and neighbours to the house. When the party was in full swing, Dusty started offering the guests the most expensive ornaments and furniture as gifts.

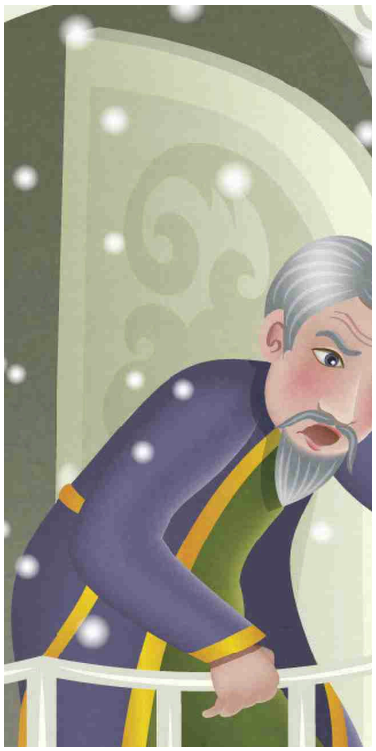
“May you live to be a hundred, generous Antonio!” cried his neighbour Benita. “May I take this beautiful lamp from your hallway? I’ve long admired it.”

“Of course!” said Dusty and Rosa together.

The sound of people laughing, talking and carrying away his goods finally woke Antonio.

“What’s all that noise?” he wondered.

From his balcony he saw a crowd of people carrying off his possessions. He was speechless with rage. His neighbour Benita looked up to the balcony and waved. “Thank you for being so generous, just as you always used to be!” she called.



Antonio broke open the locked bedroom door and rushed downstairs.

“Rosa, I am being robbed, help!” he cried.

Rosa appeared with Dusty the sprite by her side. Dusty still looked exactly like Antonio. On one side stood the real Antonio, shaking and angry. In the doorway stood another Antonio, smiling and happy and holding Rosa by the hand.

Rosa looked from one Antonio to the other.

“What’s going on?” she asked, completely confused.

“He’s an impostor,” shouted Antonio. “You’re my wife!”

Rosa looked at the shouting, angry Antonio, then she turned back to the smiling, gentle Dusty.

“This is my Antonio, the kind and generous man I married. Throw that horrible imposter into the street.”

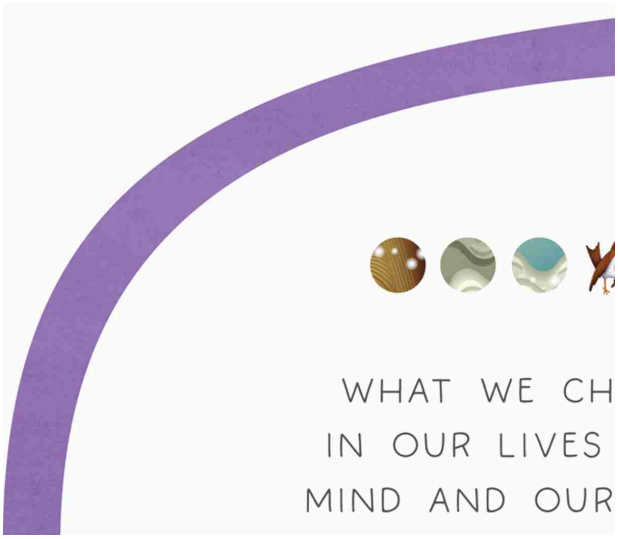
There was a great puff of smoke. Once it had cleared, Dusty the sprite appeared in his true, tiny form. Antonio and Rosa couldn’t

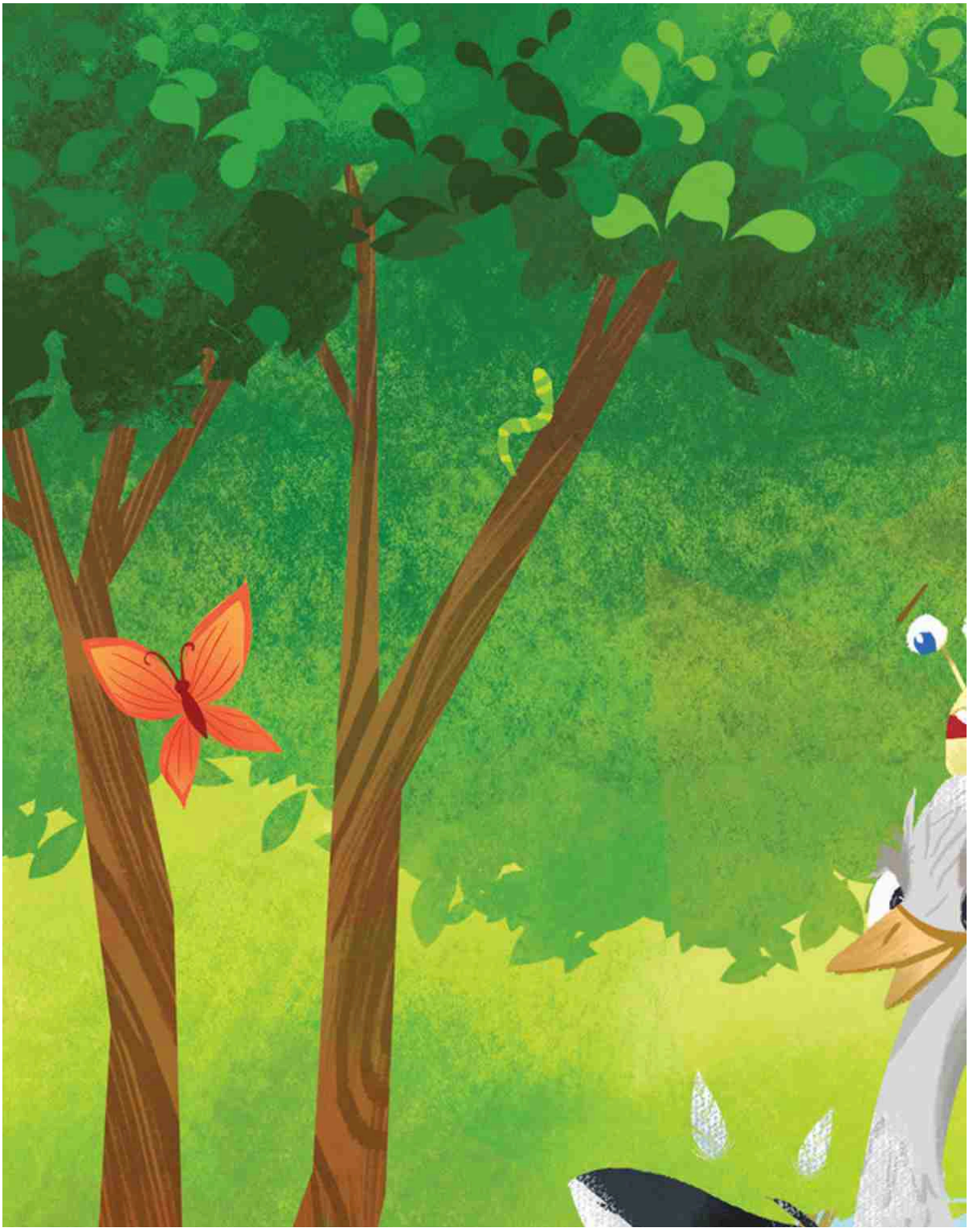
believe their eyes.

“Rosa, I’m not Antonio, I’m Dusty the house sprite. Antonio, when you were young and poor you were a happy man. Now you work only for gold, but gold cannot make you happy. It’s only sharing gold that gives it any purpose. Change your ways or you will lose your home and your possessions and, worse still, your wife and children.”

Antonio was terrified to think of all that he could lose. “I promise to be kind and generous, as I once was,” he said. “I now realize what is truly important. And it isn’t gold.”

From that day onward Antonio returned to being the man Rosa remembered. He shared his money and his possessions generously. And he realized that he gained great joy from seeing the people he cared for happy. That was worth far more than his gold.







PERCY WINS THE PRIZE

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about an ostrich called Percy who was fed up with not being able to see very well. He never knew where he was going and his knees were bruised from bumping into things. One day, all that changed. What do you think happened? Let's read the story and find out.

One morning, Percy was walking through the forest. He was thinking about the village fair and how he longed to win the running race. "But it's no good," he sighed, "I will just bump into everything." Just as he was thinking that, he almost stepped on a quail's nest!

“Look out, you long-legged fool! You nearly trod on my eggs,” squawked Mrs Quail. She flapped her feathers and flew up into Percy’s face. “Shoo!”

“What’s going on?!” he cried in surprise and ran away. Wallop! Poor Percy ran straight into a tree. “Ouch!” he said. His knees crumpled and he slid to the ground in a daze. He began to cry. Tears flowed down his beak and plopped onto the ground in a big puddle.



“Please stop crying. You’re going to drown me,” muttered a tiny voice at Percy’s feet.

Percy gulped back his tears and rubbed his eyes. He lowered his head, screwed up his nose and squinted at the ground. He could just make out a bright, rainbow-coloured shell. Two twinkling blue eyes on long stalks stared up at him.

“Hello. I’m Kevin,” said the snail, and one twinkly blue eye winked at Percy. “Why are you crying?”

By now, he had climbed up onto Percy’s foot, out of the puddle of tears.

Percy broke into sobs again. “Oh, Kevin,” he said, “I want to win the running race at the village fair. I have the fastest legs for miles around.”

“Lucky you!” said Kevin kindly. “I can’t run fast. I don’t have any legs.” He wiggled his squishy body and laughed.

“But my fast legs are no use,” said Percy. “Not really. My eyesight is so bad I can’t see where I’m going.”

“Oh dear,” said Kevin. “I wonder what can be done?” He was a clever little snail and believed every problem has a solution. So he sat and thought. “I know,” he said at last. “I could be your eyes. I have excellent eyesight. I’ll sit on your head and tell you where you’re going.”

“Really?” said Percy. “You would help me like that?”

“Of course I would!” said Kevin. He was already slithering up toward the top of Percy’s head. “I would very much enjoy a fast ride. Let’s have a practice now.”

“All right,” said Percy, and as soon as Kevin was settled, Percy began to run.

“Whee!” cried Kevin as they thundered along the path. “Just look out for that tree on the left.” Percy swerved out of the way. “And Mrs Quail’s nest is just in front of you,” warned Kevin. Percy darted sideways, away from the precious eggs.

“Thank you for being so careful!” cried Mrs Quail.

“Whoopee!” cried Percy, and he ran on faster than ever.

Percy was ecstatic! He told Kevin there was a whole week until the big race. The two friends practised every day, enjoying lots of chatting and laughter as they did so.

The other animals watched in wonder as Percy sped about, leaving a trail of dust behind him. “Look how fast I can run,” he boasted. “I’m going to win first prize!”

“We are going to win together,” said Kevin in his tiny voice. But Percy took no notice, he just kept on practising, with Kevin showing him the way. Soon Percy didn’t bother even to say “good morning” to Kevin when they met to practise, and he never said “thank you” when they were finished each night.

Instead, he just blurted out instructions. “Hurry up and tell me where to go,” he ordered the little snail.

“Turn left,” said Kevin quietly. “And look out for the fallen tree trunk.” He was sad that Percy had started ordering him around in this way.

On the morning of the village fair, Kevin tried to tell Percy how he was feeling. “I thought we were a team,” he said. But the big bird just snapped his beak. “Stop moaning. You’re lucky you get to ride with me at all. Today is the big race and I am going to win the prize.”



“We will win it together,” said Kevin again as Percy took his place with the other runners on the starting line.

“Oh, do be quiet! If it wasn’t for me you’d still be living under a rock,” scolded Percy. “I am fast. I am a winner. I am the best of the

best. You are not fast. You are not ..."

But Kevin wasn't listening any more. He'd had enough. While the ostrich was bragging, and without saying a word, Kevin had climbed onto a leaf and disappeared into the bushes, leaving boastful Percy to race alone.

BANG! The starting gun sounded and the race began.

Percy started to run, but without Kevin's help, he couldn't see where he was going. "Kevin! Where are you?" he squawked. All he could see was a fuzzy mist. He tripped over his own feet and landed in a heap in the thick bushes. The other runners sped away.

"Oh dear," he said, untangling his feathers from a particularly prickly bush. "I've been a very silly ostrich. I'll never win the race now." Then he started to cry. But it wasn't losing the race that made him sad – it was the thought that he had lost his friendship with Kevin.

"Excuse me. Can you please stop crying," said a voice below him, "or I am going to drown."

Percy squinted at the ground. "Kevin!" he cried. "I'm sorry I was so mean, especially when you were so kind to me." He hung his head in shame. "We were a team."

"Yes," said Kevin, "we were." Then, seeing Percy was truly sorry, he said, "Thank you for realizing how bad you made me feel. I forgive you. Can we be friends again?"

"Yes, please! Friends!" agreed Percy, and Kevin climbed onto Percy's head.

As they began to walk away together, Kevin said: "I'm sorry that you didn't win the race. Perhaps we can have another go next year. You can try to win the prize then."

"That would be fun," agreed Percy. "But the thing that matters most is that you and I are friends again."


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THE BRAVE LITTLE PARROT

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a little blue parrot who lived high up in the treetops of a tropical forest. One day, he surprised everyone, because, despite being only a small bird, he did a very brave thing. What do you think it was? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... one morning a big, dark storm cloud climbed high up into the sky above the forest where the little blue parrot lived. The storm cloud was very angry and he roared and thundered, making a terrible noise. He threw silver bolts of lightning down onto the forest, and one struck an old dead tree, which burst into flames. Next, the cloud took a big, bold breath and blew the flames, making sparks jump into the surrounding trees, which then caught fire themselves. When the flames reached so high that they were licking at the bottom of the parrot's nest, the parrot had no choice but to fly, higher and higher into the air.

As the storm growled and the flames grew, the little blue parrot looked down and saw lots of his friends – the other animals who

lived in the forest – running around, confused and frightened by the fire. They didn't know where to go to find safety.



The parrot was worried about them, but stayed calm and tried to think of a way to help. Then it came to him. "Head toward the river!" he shouted. "Follow me, I'll show you. This way, my friends!" And he flew in the direction of the river to guide them. But not all the animals were able to follow – some couldn't hear him and others were trapped by the flames, crying out for help.

Suddenly, the little blue parrot had another idea! He flew down to the river and dived into the water, soaking his wings. Then, he flew back to the burning forest. When he was high above the flames, he shook his wings and little droplets of water fell down on the fire with a soft hisssssss ... Back and forth he flew from the fire to the river, from the river to the fire. Each time, he carried feather-loads of water and sprinkled it on the flames.

The parrot was concentrating so much on trying to put out the fire that he didn't notice he was being watched. High above in the sky, higher even than the storm clouds, floated a magnificent castle with gleaming spires and towers that shone as brightly as the stars.

Watching from the castle were the gods of the happy lands. They shook their heads in disbelief at the parrot's actions. "What *is* that little blue parrot trying to do?" they asked one another. "Does he think he can put out that great fire with a few droplets of water?"

"Fly away and save yourself!" the gods cried out to the little blue parrot.

But the parrot's heart was so full of love and loyalty for his friends that he ignored the gods' advice and kept flying back and forth to the river as quickly as he could.

One of the gods could bear it no longer and decided to try to help. In a whoosh, he transformed himself into a great bald eagle and flew toward the burning forest where the little parrot was zigzagging in and out of the flames. "My little friend, you can't put out this raging fire with just a few drops of water, it's hopeless. Please, fly away to safety!" he pleaded.

"With respect, great eagle," cried the little blue parrot, "can't you see that my friends are in danger? I love my friends and if *I* don't try to save them, who will?"

He was getting tired now – the smoke from the fire was making him cough and his eyes were stinging, but he wouldn't give up. The fingers of flames stretched up, trying to scorch his beautiful blue feathers, and his little feet were getting hotter and hotter. "Ouch!" he squawked, as he flew higher to escape the flames. But still he refused to give up.

The godly eagle was so moved by the little blue parrot's bravery, determination and love for his fellow creatures that he suddenly began to cry. His silver teardrops rained down, and as they flowed, they streamed onto the forest fire and the poor trapped animals. "Hissss, hissss, hissss!" went the angry flames, as the eagle's tears

of compassion gradually put them out one by one ... until, finally, the fire was completely out!

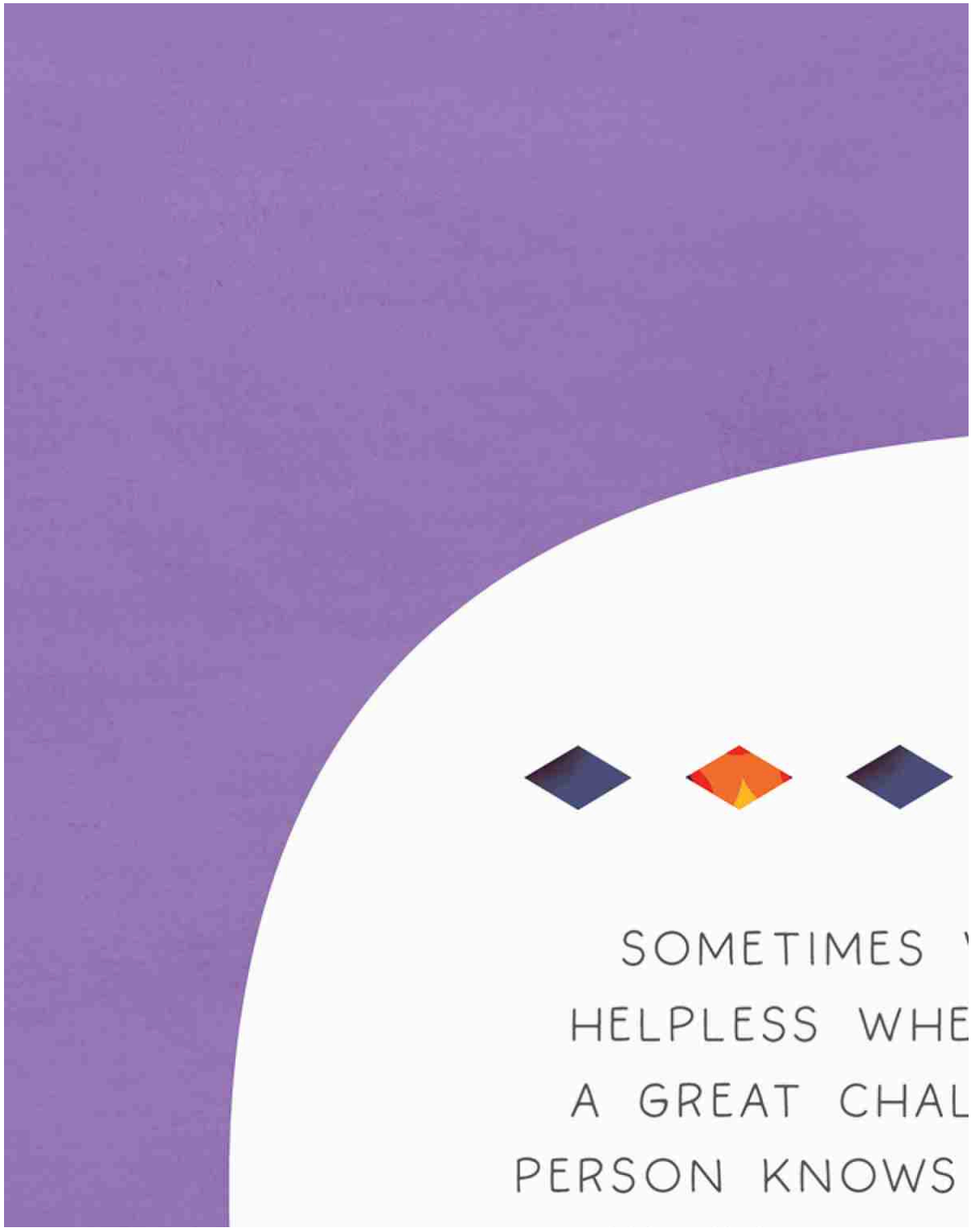
The little parrot couldn't believe it – all the animals were safe! He whooped with joy and turned somersaults in the sky. And the sun couldn't help laughing, as he watched. All the animals cheered, "Hooray! Hooray! The brave parrot has saved us! Thank you! Thank you!" The storm cloud then slunk away, over the horizon, and left the sun to dry the forest with his warm, glowing smile.



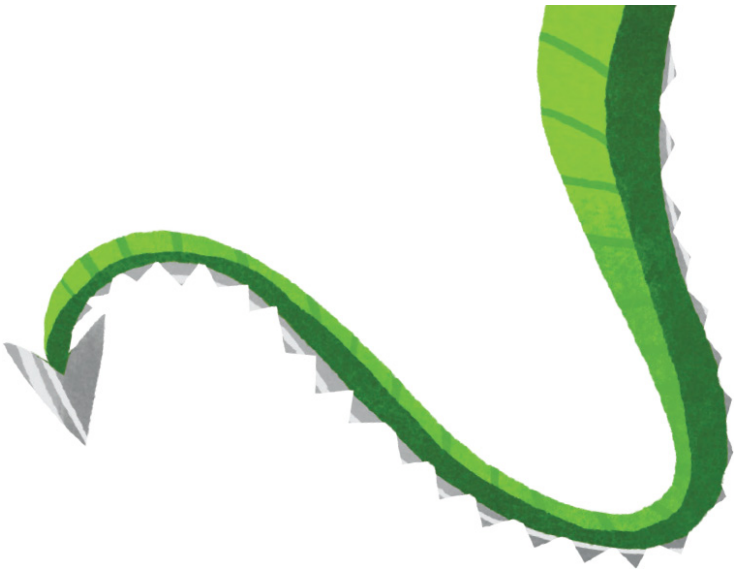
The great eagle flew back to his castle in the sky, turned himself into a god once more and watched fondly as the happy parrot celebrated with his friends in the forest. "Who would have thought that such a small bird could be so brave, so determined and hold so much love in his little heart?" he said to himself. "He deserves a reward, and I know just the thing."

And so the god raised his hand and pointed at the little blue parrot. As all the animals looked on in wonder, a jet of multi-coloured stars flew down to the small bird and there was a big puff of smoke. When it cleared, the little parrot was no longer blue – his tail feathers now shimmered in all the colours of the rainbow. And he sparkled and glittered under the kindly gaze of the sun.




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THE GENTLE DRAGON

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a gentle dragon who was cruelly taken captive. Do you think he managed to escape? Let's read the story and find out.

There once was a mighty dragon who could breathe fire hotter than a volcano. His claws were as sharp as daggers and the spikes on his back were like the blades of an axe. Yet the dragon was a peaceful soul. He lived quietly in a deep cave on a mountainside. On sunny days he dozed in a hillside meadow, keeping far away from the people living in the towns and villages below.

One day, a prince came riding through the meadow, and saw the dozing dragon. "Seize the beast!" he cried to his huntsmen. "And take him back to the castle!"

The huntsmen jabbed at the dragon with their spears. “Come on, you great brute,” they roared.

The dragon knew that with one puff of his fiery breath, he could burn them all to cinders. But he also knew that if he did, more men would come, and they would hunt him till the end of time. So, he did not fight. He let the men push and prod and poke him all the way to the castle, where they tied him up in a net in the castle courtyard.

“Tomorrow I will slay you in the market square,” boasted the prince. The dragon simply looked away.

Then, as darkness fell, the dragon used the blades on his tail to cut the net. And with a swoosh of his wings, he flew back to his cave to sleep.

Next morning, the prince was livid. He gathered his huntsmen and marched back to the meadow. This time they had whips as well as spears. They caught the dragon and dragged him back to the castle courtyard, tying him up in chains. “Show us your fire now!” the prince goaded.

“I don’t want to fight,” said the dragon simply.

“Then tomorrow,” sneered the prince, “you will die.”

But that night, with one fiery puff, the dragon melted the chains and then he flew home to sleep in his cave.

On the third day the prince and the huntsmen came again. This time they had flaming torches, and they threw the dragon into the deepest dungeon.

“You can never escape now,” laughed the prince. “Tomorrow I will slay you!” But the dragon picked the lock on the dungeon door with the tip of his claw and tiptoed past the sleeping guard as quietly as a kitten.

This time he’d had enough. “If the prince insists on turning me out of my own bed, then I shall sleep in his!” he thought. He crept up the

castle stairs and into the prince's room, where he lay at the foot of his bed and waited for him to wake up. When the prince opened his eyes, he was too scared to call for help. "Don't hurt me!" he trembled.



"One puff of my fiery breath and you'd be dead," said the dragon calmly. "But I don't want to harm you. Many men and dragons have died fighting one another. I want only to live quietly in my cave on the mountain. I will spare your life, but will you leave me to live as I please?"

The prince was humbled. He realized that the dragon was right. So many of his aunts and uncles had died fighting dragons. Surely it would be better to live side by side. "Go in peace!" he said. "I will not trouble you again."

"Thank you!" breathed the dragon. And he flapped his wings and flew out through the prince's open window – to live happily in his cave on the mountain for evermore.


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TWO DUCKS AND A TURTLE

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a turtle who lived in a very large pond full of cool, clear water. That is, until something very strange happened! What could it be? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... this turtle lived a long, long time ago in a faraway land that was very hot. For many years, he was quite content swimming lazily around the large pond, or basking in the sun on top of one of the big, rubbery, green lily pads that covered its surface. Sometimes, he would snap at a passing dragonfly, or try to catch a fat, juicy water beetle to eat.

All in all, life was good for the turtle. Until one summer – one scorching hot and dry summer – the rain stopped falling and the sun shone so fiercely that the cool, clear water in the pond began to dry up. Little by little the pond shrank. Every day it became drier and drier, smaller and smaller, until finally there was so little water left

that the turtle decided he must take action to find a new home before it disappeared completely. But how on earth would he do this?

Early one morning, as the sun took hold of the bright blue sky, the turtle set off to look for help. Before long, he heard two ducks quacking loudly to each other as they flew overhead.

Quickly, the turtle called up to them, “Ducks! You ducks up there! Please help me! My home pond is drying up. Would you kindly take me to a new pond full of water?”

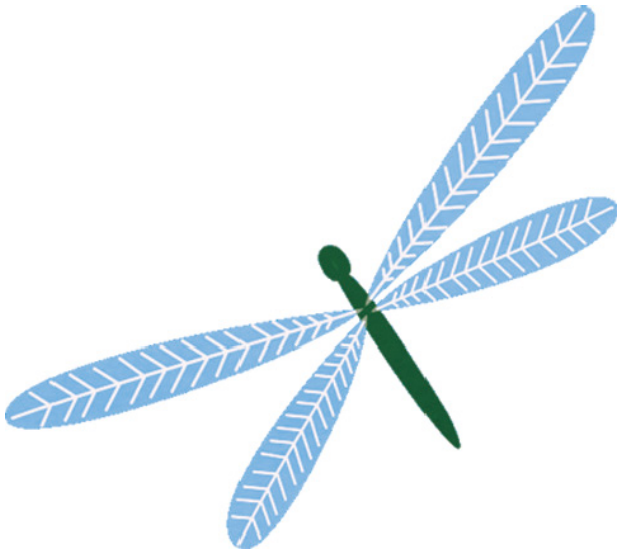
“But how can we do that?” replied the ducks. “We’re flying in the air and you’re down there on the ground.”

Now, as it so happened, at that very moment the turtle tripped over a long, straight stick that lay across his path.

“What if you carry this stick between your beaks?” he shouted up. “Then I could hold on to the middle with my mouth and you could carry me to a new pond.”

“That’s a good idea,” agreed the ducks, landing beside him. “But, if we do, you must promise us that you will not open your mouth.”

And so it was agreed. The ducks placed the stick between them and with the turtle holding on with his mouth, they took off. The ducks carried the turtle across the sky toward a pond full of cool, clear water shimmering in the distance.



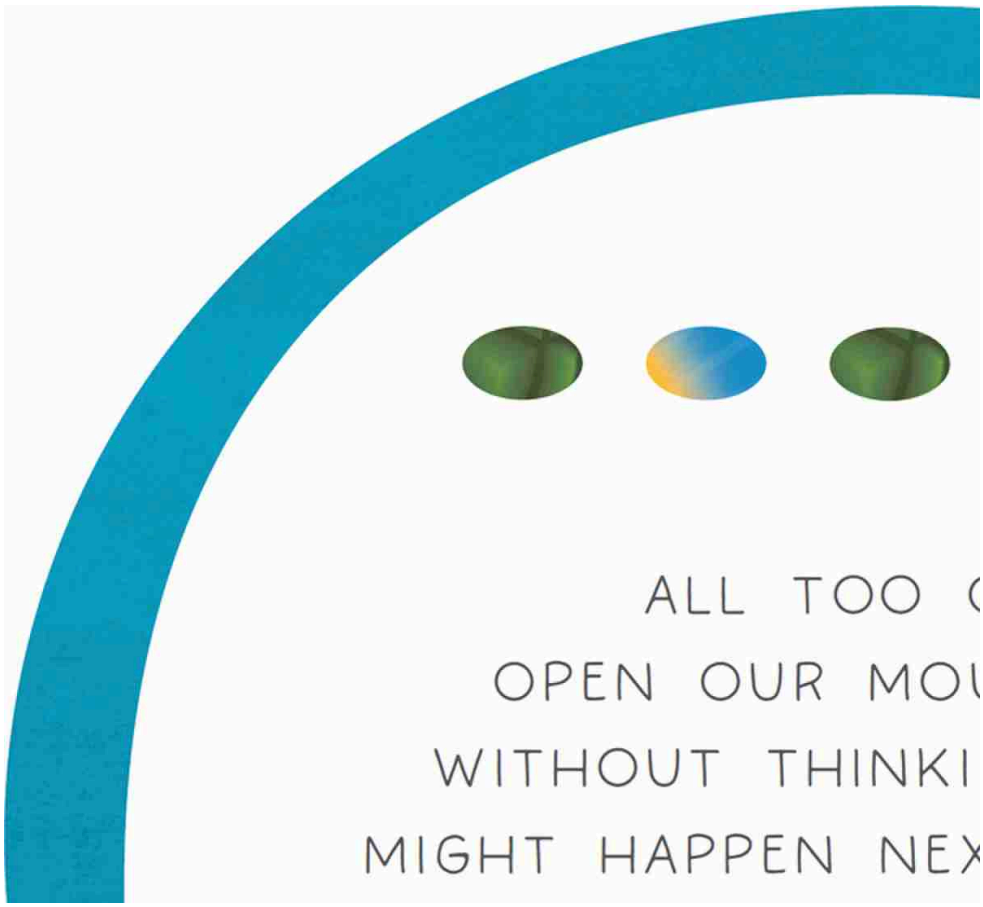
On the way, they flew over a field where some children were playing noisily. Hearing the flapping of the ducks' wings above them, the children looked up and burst out laughing at the strange sight that met their eyes.

"How ridiculous!" shouted a boy. "Two ducks carrying a turtle on a stick! Doesn't he look silly!"

Well ... this made the turtle very angry. Even though he probably did look odd, there was a very good reason for it. In his rage, he shouted at the children, "You're the silly ones. You don't underst-aaaa-and!"

As he had opened his mouth to speak, the poor turtle lost his grip on the stick and tumbled down out of the sun-filled sky, crashing onto the grass with a thump.

"Ouch!" he shouted, rubbing his sore, bruised head. "If only I hadn't listened to those children. I'll think twice before angrily snapping at someone again."


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CORNFLOUR THE MISCHIEVOUS DONKEY

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a mischievous donkey called Cornflower, who thought she was very clever and very funny. She loved to play tricks on people, but sometimes she couldn't help taking things just a little too far. Do you think her tricks eventually got her into trouble? Let's read the story and find out.

Late one afternoon, Cornflower was peeping through a gap in a hedge and giggling quietly to herself. She had just nibbled a big hole in Ms Cherry's shopping bag while she was talking to Mrs O'Connor, the farmer's wife. Flour was spilling from Ms Cherry's bag like snow, but neither of the women had noticed a thing.

Just then a big gust of wind blew along the lane. It threw the flour up into the air, where it hung for a moment in a cloud and then dropped down covering the two women from head to toe. Smothered in the white flour, they spluttered in surprise. Cornflower had to bite

her lip so as not to burst out laughing and give herself away. She ducked her head behind the hedge and retreated. When she was safely out of earshot, she burst into wild hee-haws. She rolled on the ground, laughing so much that tears streamed down her long cheeks. After a while her laughter settled down to a few random snorts. “Being me is too much fun!” she giggled, delighted with herself.

By the time Cornflower had got over her laughter, it was getting dark. She scrambled up and hurried home toward her nice, warm stable on Mr and Mrs O’Connor’s farm. She was trotting down the lane when a big, white shadow suddenly blew through the trees in front of her. She froze on the spot and brayed with fright.

“It’s a ghoul!” she cried. The ghostly shape hovered above her and then dropped to the ground right in front of Cornflower. She shivered as she stared down at it, too scared to move. Then the moon came out from behind the trees, casting its light on the ground, and Cornflower saw there was no ghost at all!

“You silly old donkey, it’s just a harmless sheet!” she laughed. “It must have blown off Mrs O’Connor’s washing line.” But then she had an idea. “What a marvellous prank it could be to scare everybody with this sheet! I could disguise myself as a ghost and give everyone I meet a real fright.”

Cornflower picked up the sheet with her big teeth, tossed back her head and threw the sheet over herself so it covered her all the way down to her hooves. She bit two eye-holes in the fabric so she could see where she was going, then trotted off to see who she could spook.

She startled the chickens and the ducks. She rattled the dog and the sheep. She frightened the cat and the cows. And she terrified poor Ms Cherry. Soon the evening air was alive with clucking,

quacking, barking, bleating, screeching, mooing and screaming, as Cornflower slipped in and out of barns and meadows, past pens and hutches, sending animals and people fleeing in every direction. Cornflower had so much fun scaring everybody that she dressed up in the sheet again the following night. And the night after that. Soon word spread that there was a fiendish ghost haunting the barns, fields and lanes around the farm.



One evening, Mrs O'Connor was sitting in her cosy kitchen stroking Truffles the cat, while her husband told her all the tales of the strange sightings.

"Goodness!" she cried. "Perhaps it was the ghost who covered me in flour!"

Just then, she saw something white outside the window and jumped up. Truffles went flying through the air and landed on Mr O'Connor's head. "Heavens! It's – it's ... the ghost!" stammered Mrs O'Connor, pointing at the kitchen window. Then she fainted. Her husband, meanwhile, banged around the kitchen trying to pry the terrified Truffles from his head.

“Oh, how hilarious!” said Cornflower under her breath as she pressed her sheet-covered nose against the kitchen window, watching the pandemonium inside. She found the whole thing so funny that she couldn’t contain herself any longer and accidentally let out a very loud hee-haw.

The sound of the donkey’s braying stopped Mr O’Connor in his tracks and roused Mrs O’Connor from her faint. They all turned and looked toward the window.

“A ghost, indeed!” cried Mrs O’Connor. “It’s that rascal donkey Cornflower playing tricks again! I would recognize that braying anywhere!”

She jumped up from the kitchen floor and flew to the door, followed closely by her husband, who now had Truffles clinging to his shoulder.

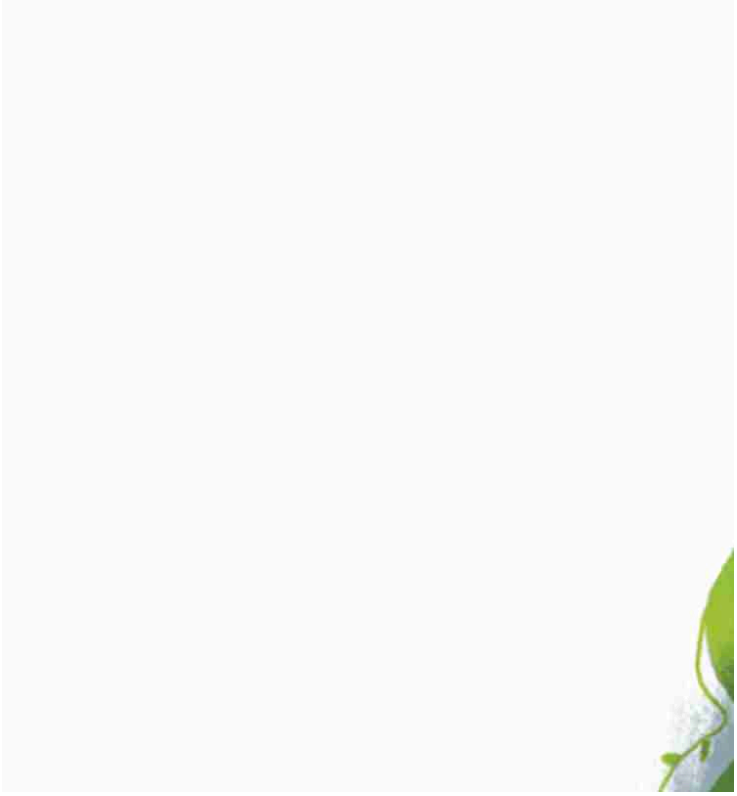
“CORNFLOWER!” bellowed Mr O’Connor. “We know it’s you under that sheet!”

Terrified at the thought of what would happen if they caught her, Cornflower started to run. But her hooves caught in the sheet and she fell into the duck pond with a great SPLASH! Now it was Mr and Mrs O’Connor’s turn to laugh – and Truffles and the ducks, too! There in the moonlight was Cornflower, the white sheet still clinging to her back. She was stuck in the middle of the muddy pond, soaking wet and covered in weeds and slime.

“Quack! Quack! Quack!” The ducks laughed so hard they thought they would burst. The sound of their laughter, and of the guffaws from Mr and Mrs O’Connor and Truffles, soon woke the cows and the sheep and the dog – and even Ms Cherry next door. Everyone came to see what all the noise was about. When they saw Cornflower sitting in the pond in her soggy sheet, they laughed too.

“That’s what you get for playing tricks on people, you naughty donkey!” said Mr O’Connor as Cornflower finally scrambled out of the pond, her head hanging in shame.

“I’m so sorry,” she muttered, as she trotted home to her warm, dry stable, promising never to play tricks again.




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THE PRINCE AND THE STICKY HAIR

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a young prince called Hector who discovered something very important about his own strength. Would you like to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... it was a beautiful sunny afternoon when the boat carrying Prince Hector back from overseas came into harbour. And before the young prince left the vessel, the captain warned him, "Your Highness, while you have been away training to be a warrior, an evil monster called Sticky Hair has come to live in the forest, so I advise you not to take that route to the palace. Instead, go the long way home around the mountains."

"Thank you for your advice," replied Hector, "but I'll be fine. I want to get home before sunset. And I have my weapons if I need them." "After all," he thought, "I'm a trained warrior. I'm not afraid of a silly old monster." And the young prince strode boldly on, into the woods.

Just as Prince Hector was beginning to think that the monster didn't exist, he reached a clearing in the forest, and there stood the most gigantic, ugly creature he had ever seen. The monster was as big as a house and completely covered in matted hair. He looked like a living, breathing – but very horrible – haystack! The creature had a huge head and he stared at the prince with eyes as big as dinner plates. Two big orange tusks stuck out of his enormous mouth and his teeth were green and revolting. His belly was big and round like a beach ball and covered in large pale orange spots.

"Grrrrrrrrr!" roared Sticky Hair. "What do you think you are doing in *my* wood, little man? You look like a tasty morsel and I'm going to eat you for dinner!"

"Pah! I'm not frightened of you, you horrible old monster," replied Hector. "I'm a warrior. I can easily defeat you with my sword. I dare you to fight me."

Swiftly as the wind, the prince leapt forward and thrust his sword at the monster. But to his surprise, it just stuck in the creature's sticky hair.

So the prince left his sword there, quickly rolled out of the way, got to his feet and grabbed his bow. *Ptwang! Ptwang! Ptwang!* He shot arrow after arrow at the monster, but, like the sword, each one just became tangled in his sticky hair. The prince was astonished.

"Ha, ha, ha!" boomed Sticky Hair. "You're very funny, little man! You'll never beat me!" Then he shook himself from his ugly head down to his big smelly toes and all the prince's arrows dropped down to the ground.

Hector now had only his club left for protection, so he swung it at Sticky Hair with all his might, but it, too, became caught in the monster's hair and was pulled from the prince's strong grip. "I'm not defeated yet!" he shouted. "My weapons may be useless, but I'm

young and strong, and I'll fight you with my fists," he cried, as he ran and leapt on the monster – and got firmly stuck!



Even now, as Prince Hector dangled from the creature's sticky hair, he continued to act fearlessly. So much so, that the monster started to wonder exactly what gave him such courage.

"Why are you not frightened of me, little man? I could gobble you up in a snap and a crack!" he threatened fiercely.

Still hanging from the monster's tangled hair, Hector was busy thinking about what to do next. All of a sudden, it came to him. He realized that he would have to use his brains to outwit the creature, instead of his weapons. So he shouted up to Sticky Hair, "I'll tell you why I'm not afraid of you! My skin is coated in poison, so if you eat me you'll die. I dare you to eat me!"

Sticky Hair didn't believe Hector at first, but the more the prince insisted, the more worried the monster became. "Hmm ... I'd like to eat him, but I can't risk getting poisoned," he muttered. Reluctantly, he pulled the prince from his matted coat and set him on the ground, unharmed.

"Well, fearless little man, you've convinced me you're telling the truth and I don't want to die, so I'll have to let you go," he said grudgingly.

Hector was delighted. Not only had he outwitted the monster and saved his own life, but he had also learned an important lesson: that the most powerful defence had been inside him all along – his intelligence! Not his strength or his weapons!

Looking up into the monster's big eyes, the young prince said: "I'm very grateful to you, Sticky Hair – not just for releasing me, but also for teaching me that I don't have to fight to be brave, strong and clever. Would you like to know my secret? If you promise not to eat me, I'll tell you as a reward for sparing my life."

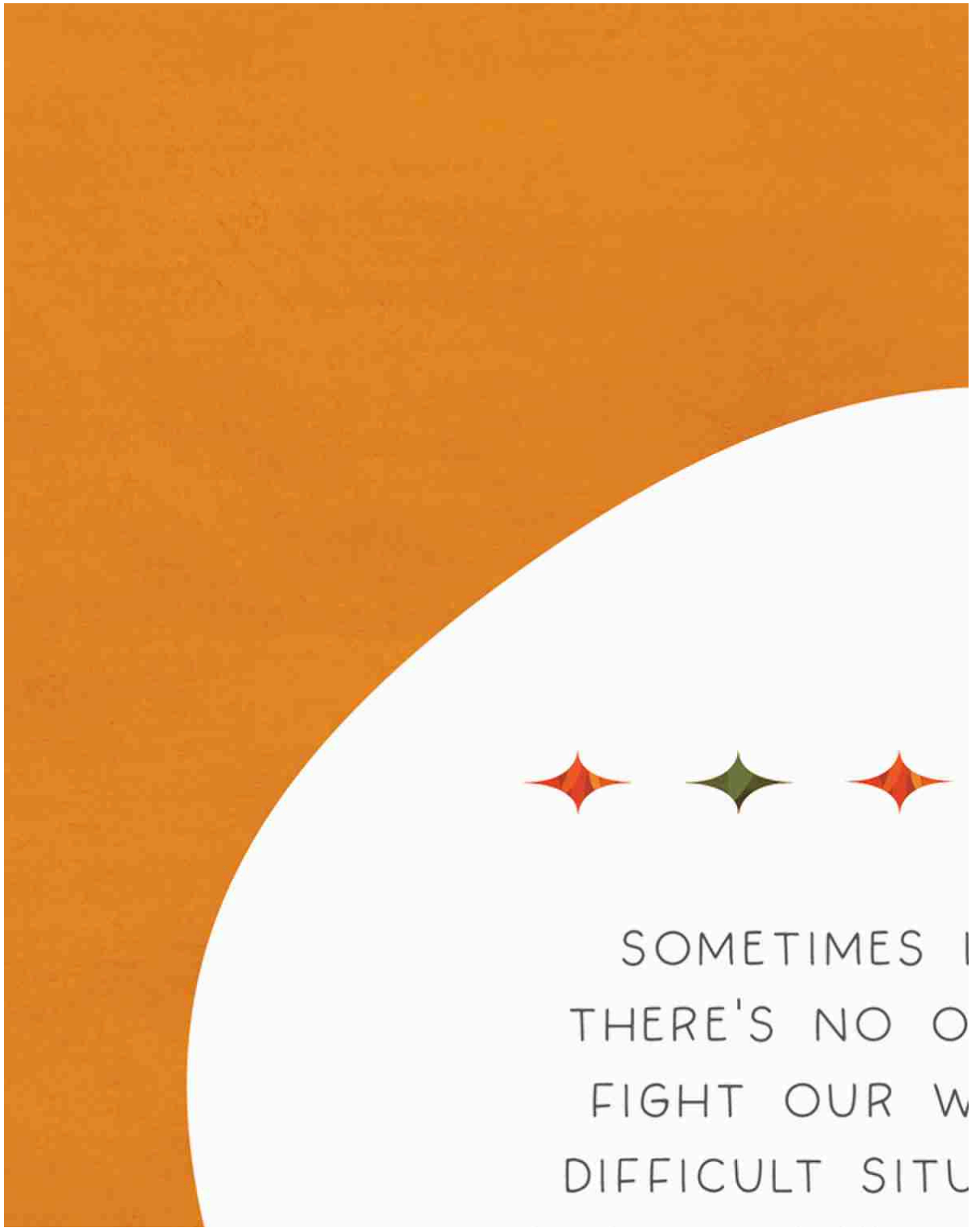


Surprised, Sticky Hair agreed. Although the monster had never been defeated until that day, he had always been frightened of people. In fact, he had only attacked people to stop *them* from attacking *him*. But now, the creature was eager to learn to be fearless, like Hector, so he let the young prince become his teacher and friend.

And the strangest thing happened: the more Sticky Hair learned how to use his brain, the less he felt the need to harm others. Using his intelligence brought the creature great happiness and, gradually, he was transformed from a scary, lonely monster into a friendly forest giant.

Prince Hector let all the local people know that the "monster" had completely changed. And gradually they became his trusted friends, bringing him food and living with him in peace and harmony. And the new, eager-to-please Sticky Hair repaid their kindness by protecting them and guiding travellers safely through the forest.




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THE SWEET-TOOTH CHARM

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about Bobby, a boy who was training to be a wizard. One day, he got into big trouble on his way home from Wiz School. What do you think went wrong? Let's read the story and find out.

One chilly afternoon, Bobby was hurrying along the snowy mountain path back to his home in the valley. He had just learned a new spell at Wiz School and wanted to give all his friends in the village a wonderful surprise.

He was whistling merrily to himself. His Wiz School cloak hung snugly around his shoulders, and his hands were thrust deep in his pockets to protect them from the cold. In his right pocket, he could feel the smooth surface of the sugary charm he had made that day in class. It was a Sweet- Tooth Charm full of special magic. As soon as he was with his friends, he would say the magic words and the charm would fizz and crackle and make the most delicious candies

appear from nowhere: Red Roarers that whistle when you suck, Orange Swirly Pops that make your tongue stripy, Fiery Flashes that fizz in your mouth, Green Globes that turn into gum and make your tongue go green, Rainbow Snakes that crackle with popping candy, Strawberry Delights filled with soft cream, and Spider Saucers that are sweet and sour all at once. Bobby couldn't wait for his friends to try all the treats.

He was so excited that he didn't notice two boys creeping up behind him. Before he knew it, the bullies had grabbed the collar of his cloak and lifted his feet off the ground.

"Give us some money!" they demanded.

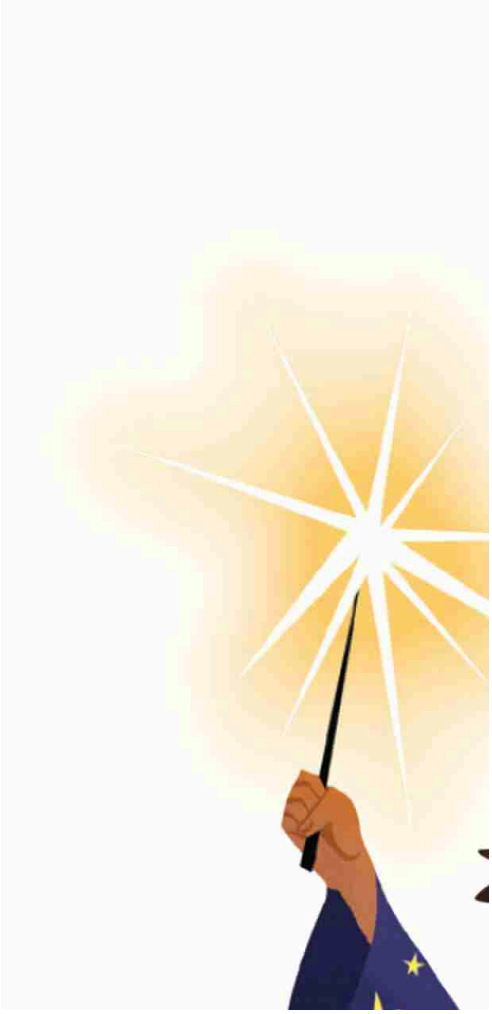
"I don't have any money!" said Bobby. "But I can do magic!" he stammered. "Really?" asked the boys.

"Yes, I have a charm in my pocket, but it will only work once, so if you come with me to the village, I'll make candies rain from the sky!"

The boys dropped Bobby back onto his feet. "What sort of candies?" they asked suspiciously.

"Fiery Flashes, Green Globes, Spider Saucers ..." said Bobby. "All the really good ones. There will be enough for everyone to share."

"No way!" said one bully. "We don't share. Magic up the treats here and now!" He twisted Bobby's ear, while the other boy pinched his nose.



“Stop!” Bobby pleaded. “If you let me go, I’ll do the spell now.” He was almost crying. His nose stung and his ear hurt, and he was sad not to be able to share the delicious sweets with his friends. He took a deep breath, reached inside his pocket for the charm and then held up his wand. “Nimby numby, flum tiddle tum,” he muttered, waving his wand over the Sweet-Tooth Charm. “Make sugary swirls and candy curls come.” The charm began to fizz and crackle. Then it shot up into the air like a firework. There was a loud BANG! and a shower of brightly coloured sweets rained down on the path.

“Wow!” The bullies opened their mouths wide to catch the falling treasure. But they couldn’t catch anywhere near as many as they

wanted. “Give us your dumb cape!” they cried, pushing Bobby to the ground and pulling his Wiz School cloak off his arms. They held out the cloak to catch the falling sweets. Then they scurried away with their mouths full and the cloak bulging with goodies.

Bobby staggered to his feet and stared helplessly down the path after them. “Now I can’t surprise my friends. And I’ve lost my school cloak, too.”

But, before the bullies could get very far, a gang of four big boys came the other way. They had seen the boys catching the falling sweets. “Give us that!” the gang leader barked, pointing at the cloak.

“No! These candies are ours. We’re not sharing them. Go and get your own!” They pointed back toward where Bobby had been standing on the path. “That boy Bobby, over there. He can make sweets rain from the sky.”

The leader of the gang marched in the direction the boys were pointing. He couldn’t see Bobby, who had hidden behind a tree. “He’s gone!” shouted the gang leader. “Now stop talking and give us what’s in that cloak!” The gang closed in on the two bullies.

“No way!” shouted the bullies, and a terrible fight broke out. The bigger boys punched the smaller ones; and the smaller boys kicked the bigger ones.

Bobby shuddered at the noises of the fight, but, peeping out from his hiding place, he saw that in all the commotion the bullies had dropped the cloak full of sweets on the ground. It was little more than an arm’s reach away from him. Quick as a flash, he darted forward, grabbed the cloak and ran helter-skelter down the mountain path.

“Hurry!” he called, shouting to his friends as he ran into the snowy streets of the village. “Tell everyone to come to the market square. I’ve got candies for everyone.” All the village children ran out of their houses and Bobby laid his cloak on the ground.

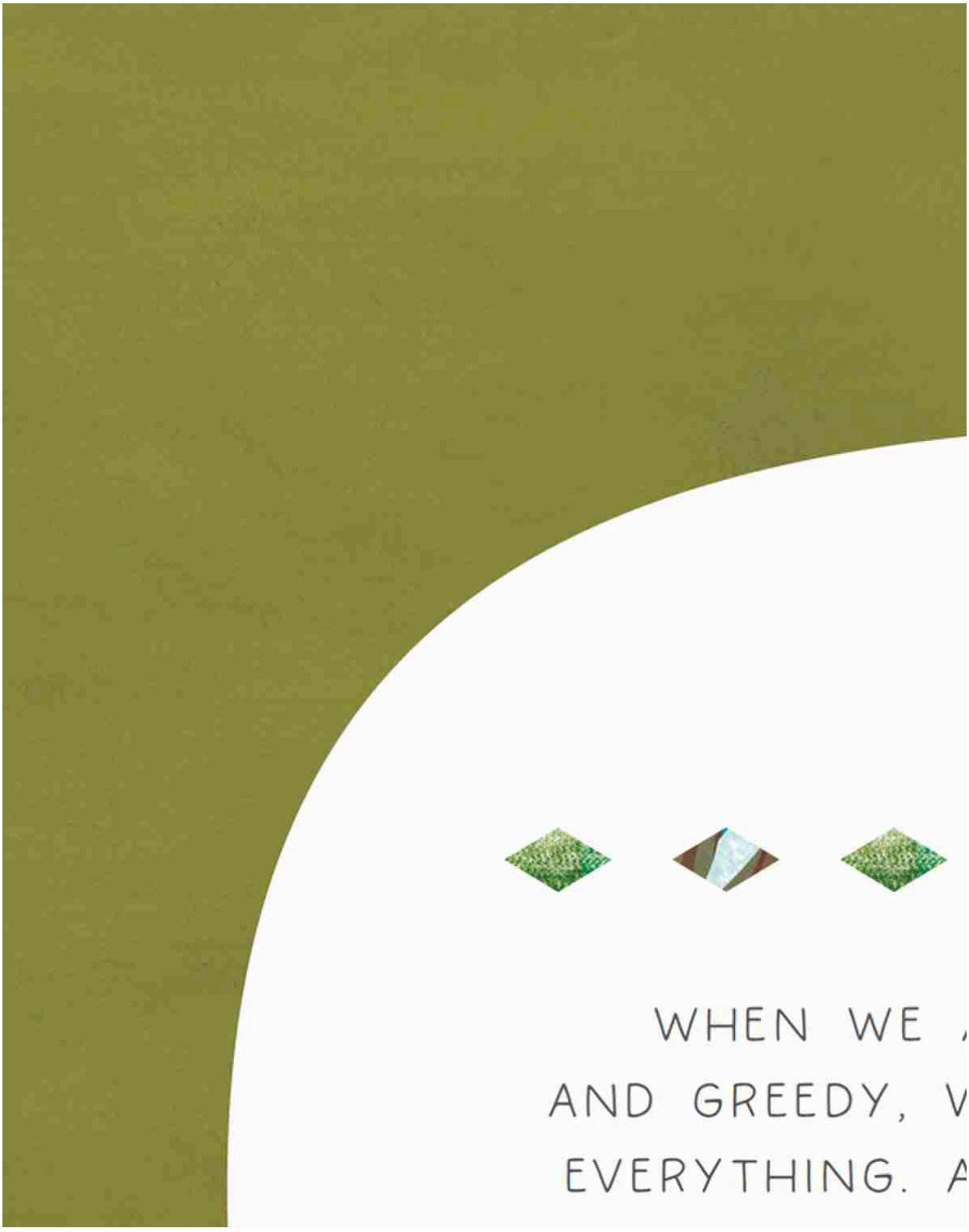
“Help yourselves!” he said. And everybody did. There were plenty of sweets to go around. Soon all the village children had green tongues from chewing the Green Globes. They gasped in delight as the Rainbow Snakes crackled and popped on their tongues and the Fiery Flashes fizzed in their mouths. “Yum!” they all said. “Thank you, Bobby. These are the best sweets ever!”

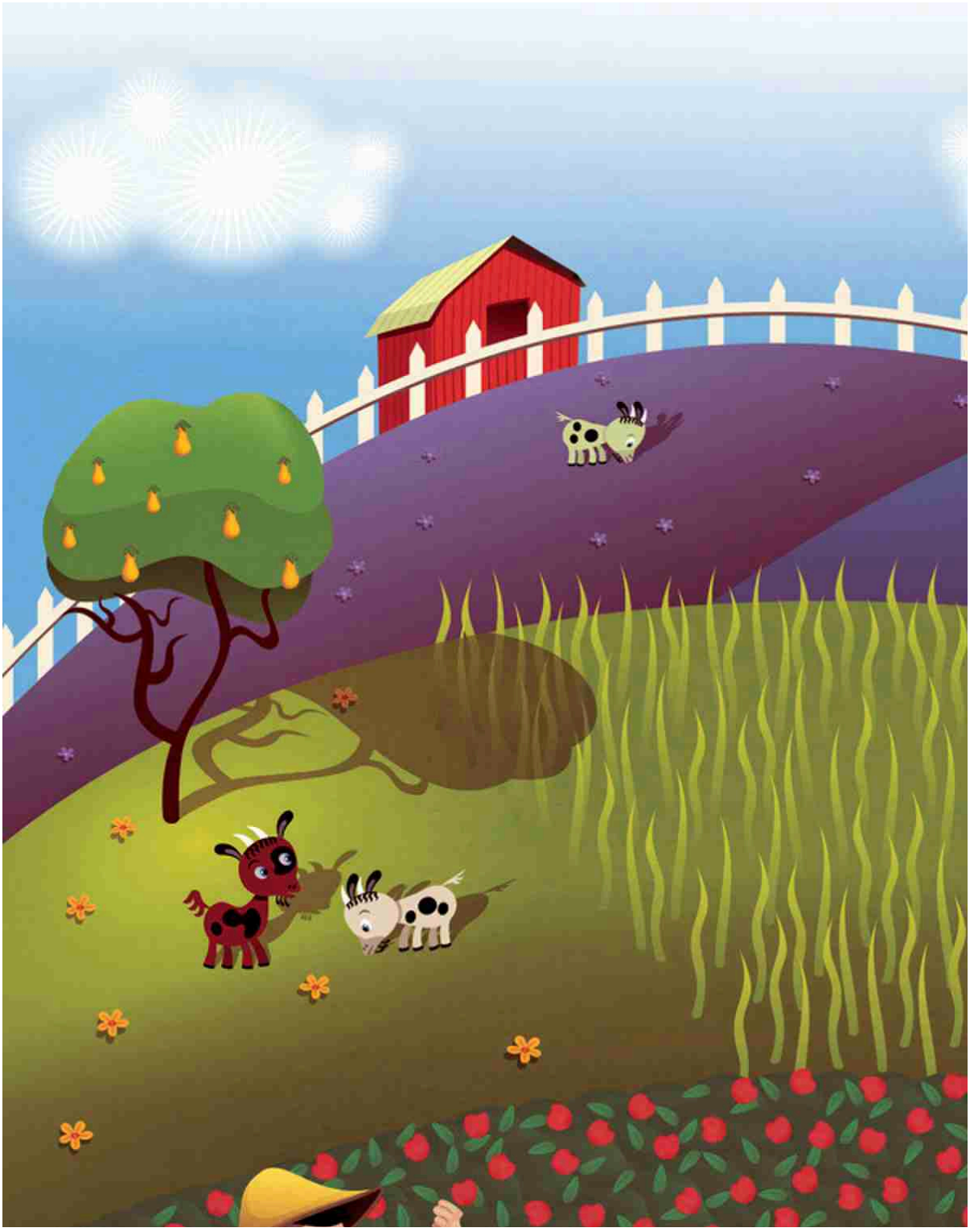
Meanwhile, up on the mountain, the two gangs of boys had realized the sweets had gone. “What are we even fighting over?” asked one of them.

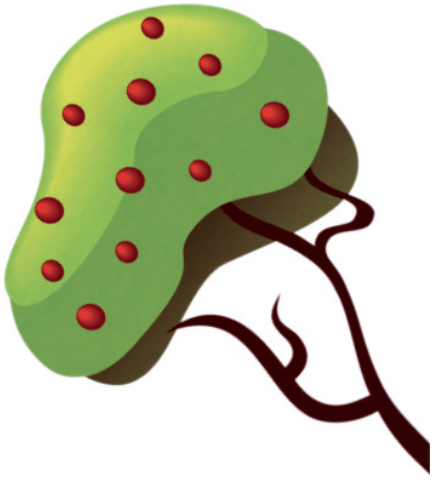
Bruised and battered, they limped down the mountain. In the village, all the children had their hands full of sweets. Embarrassed, the bullies slunk off as Bobby ran toward them. “Hey, wait!” he called. “I’ve got something for you.” He pulled out a handful of sweets. “I saved some for you, seeing as you wanted them so badly.” The boys could not believe their eyes, and Bobby’s generosity made them feel ashamed at their own greediness.

“We’re sorry we tried to bully you,” said the gang leader. “Thanks, Bobby,” they all said. “Maybe you could teach us how to do that charm? Then we can make sweets for the whole village too!”




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THE GRATEFUL BULL

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a big black bull called Delightful, who lived on Farmer Bruni's farm. Delightful was very grateful to the farmer who, despite not being very rich, took great care of him and all the other animals, and treated them with love and kindness. The grateful bull decided he wanted to do something to thank Farmer Bruni. Would you like to know what it was? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... one evening, when Delightful was standing in his barn munching on some fresh hay after a long day working in the fields, he was struck with an idea of how he could repay the farmer. He did some of his best thinking when he was eating his hay at the end of the day.

"I'm the strongest bull on the farm. So perhaps I could use my *strength* to help Farmer Bruni? We could hold a contest against

Farmer Chang's bull, Amos."

So, the next morning as Delightful was trotting out to the fields to work, he said to the farmer, "You are always so kind to me, and I've been thinking of a way to repay you. I'd like to challenge our wealthy neighbour's strongest bull to a tug-of-war contest. And we could have a prize for the winner. I'm sure I could win it for you."

Farmer Bruni thought that this was a wonderful idea, especially as he might make some money from his rich neighbour. So that afternoon he went to visit Farmer Chang, on the nearby farm.

"Good day, Farmer Chang," he said. "As there's not much work to do in the fields at the moment, I've an idea to liven things up." And he suggested the contest.

"What a splendid idea!" said his neighbour, "A tug of war between our strongest bulls would be very entertaining. But we'll need a good prize to make it worthwhile," said greedy Farmer Chang, as he imagined Amos beating Delightful. "I know. Whoever loses has to give a hundred gold pieces to the winner." And although a hundred gold pieces was a lot of money to Farmer Bruni, he was so sure that Delightful would win that he agreed to the prize.

News of the contest spread far and wide, and many local farmers gathered to watch. The two big bulls, Delightful and Amos, stood in the middle of a field with a rope stretched between them, tied to their harnesses. Farmer Bruni held his arm in the air and said to the bulls, "When I lower my arm on the count of three, I want you both to pull as hard as you can."



“One, two, three, go!” he cried, and the bulls immediately began to pull. They pulled the rope taut, and heaved and strained. But neither of the bulls seemed to be able to tug the other more than a little way.

After a couple of minutes, Farmer Bruni thought to himself, “Delightful should be winning by now,” and he began to worry that his bull was going to lose. Panicking, he picked up a stick from the ground and hit Delightful on his back. “Pull harder, you lazy bull!” he shouted. “Put your back into it or you’ll lose!”

Delightful was so shocked and upset by the farmer’s words and actions that he just stopped pulling and didn’t try at all. “This was my idea to *help* the farmer,” he thought. “I’ve never done anything bad to him, so why is he hitting and insulting me?”

Seeing his chance, the other bull pulled and pulled, and Delightful was dragged forward until Amos had won. Farmer Chang cheered and patted his bull, while the disappointed Farmer Bruni counted out the hundred gold pieces of prize money. Then, he went over to Delightful and shouted, “You gave up! You didn’t even try, and now I’ve lost a hundred gold pieces! Are you trying to ruin me?”

Delightful shook his head and said sadly, “But you called me lazy, and you beat me with a stick. What have I done to deserve such treatment?”

This question shocked Farmer Bruni, and when he thought about what he had said and done, he realized that he had wronged

Delightful. He hung his head in shame and said, “I’m so sorry. I panicked because I was frightened you would lose.”

Delightful considered for a moment. He felt sorry for the farmer. “I understand. And I forgive you,” he said. “We can still win. Go to Farmer Chang and suggest another contest with a bigger prize of two hundred gold pieces. But you must promise to be kind to me.”



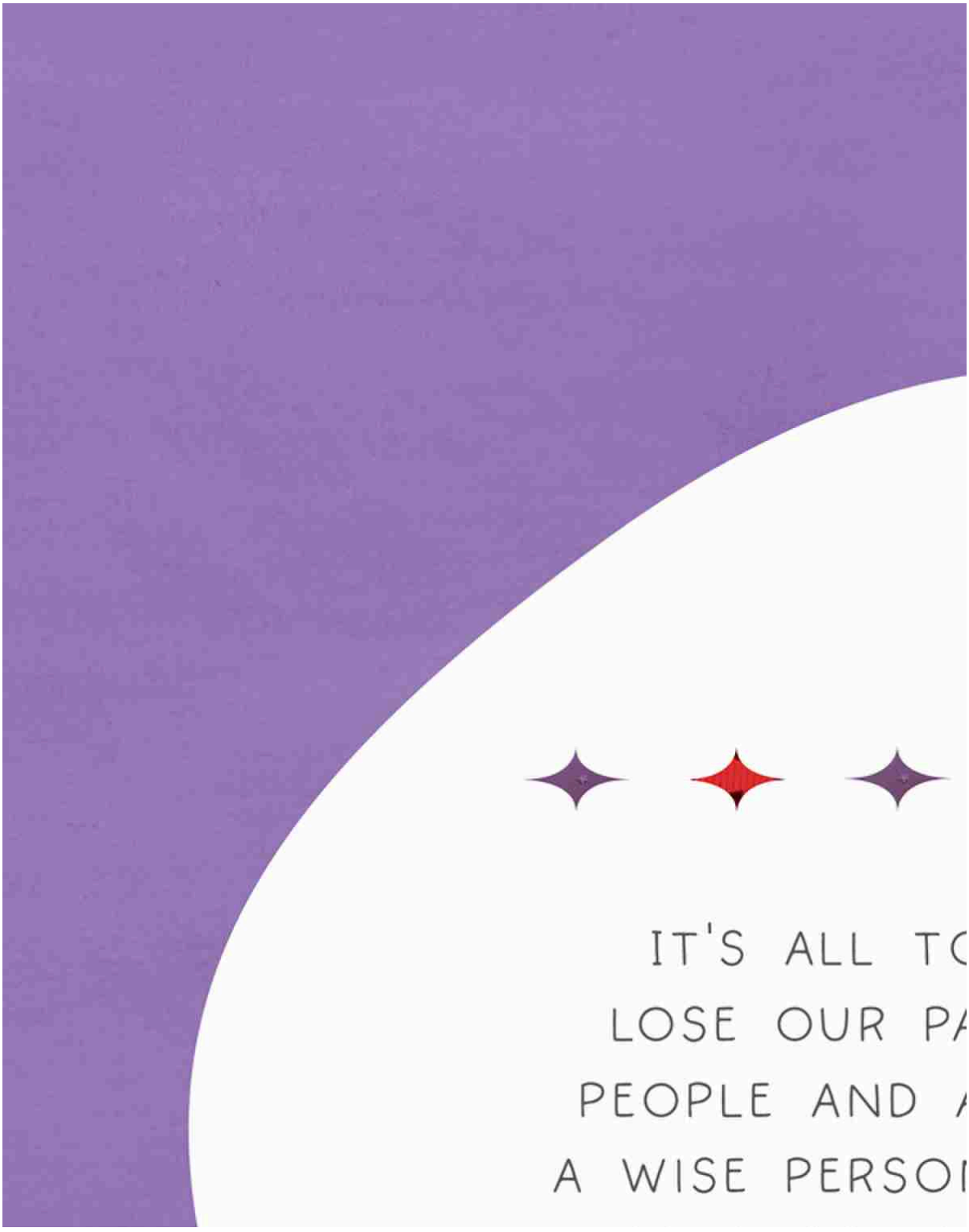
Full of admiration for Delightful’s compassion, Farmer Bruni arranged with greedy Farmer Chang to hold another tug of war. This time, Farmer Bruni really encouraged Delightful. He cheered him on, calling, “Come on, Delightful! You can do it, my strong, wise bull!” and he patted him on the back to show his affection and support.

Delightful pulled with all his might, moving backward step by step and groaning with the strain. Slowly and gradually, he pulled the exhausted Amos over the line to win. Farmer Bruni jumped with joy

and hugged his kind bull. “Thank you for doing this for me. I’m so proud of you!” he exclaimed, while Farmer Chang stood frowning and looking shocked at having lost.

After Farmer Bruni had collected the prize money, the first thing he did was go and buy Delightful a cozy blanket to keep him warm at night. That evening they held a big party to celebrate their good fortune, and the farmer promised never to mistreat Delightful again.




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THE MONSTER WHO CAME TO TEA

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about five children who spent the summer with their aunt who lived deep inside a great wood. One day the children decided to play at being explorers, but they didn't like what they found. What do you think that was? Let's read the story and find out.

It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon and the children asked if they could go outside to play.

"Of course. Just don't go too far," Aunt Dotti warned, "tea won't be long."

But Freddy, Molly, Ginger, Trolly and little Nutt (the youngest) were already zooming up and down the lawn chasing each other. Freddy, who was the eldest, found a ball in the shrubbery and called for a game of catch.

The children were having a wonderful time until Freddy threw the ball so high it flew above the other children's outstretched fingers. It whizzed out of the garden and into the dark wood beyond.

"We had better go and fetch it," sighed Molly.

Little Nutt wasn't sure that was a good idea. She didn't like the look of those tall, scary trees. "Auntie said not to go far," she reminded them. "There could be monsters!"

"Don't worry! I'll look after you," said Freddy, scooping her up onto his shoulders.

"Let's imagine we're explorers deep in the jungle," said Ginger.

"In search of ancient treasure," added Molly.

"Come on, then," called Freddy, leading the children away from the cottage.

"It's spooky in here," whispered Nutt as they made their way further into the forest.

"What was that?" squeaked Trolly, grabbing Ginger's arm as something squawked overhead.

"Just a bird," said Ginger reassuringly, trying not to sound scared himself.

"I don't like this, I want to go back!" said Trolly.

"Just a bit further. This is excit ..." But Freddy's voice trailed off. Something very large was crashing through the trees toward them. The children stared at each other.

"Run!" shouted Freddy, and they all scattered in different directions. Freddy, who was still carrying Nutt, crouched behind the nearest bush. The ground shook.

"I knew there'd be monsters in here," whimpered Nutt.

"Shhh!" whispered Freddy. He lifted Nutt so that she could peer round the bush. She caught sight of a huge log-like monster

thumping down on the ground and clamped her hands over her mouth so as not to scream.



Freddy looked up. He saw a long, grey snake waving its head high above him and yelled a warning: “A snake! A snake!”

Meanwhile, Molly had climbed into a tree. She held her breath and peeked round the tree trunk. She saw a big, greenish-brown eye staring at her.

“A monster!” she screeched. She was so surprised she fell out of the tree and landed deep in the soft undergrowth.

“Hreee-uh!” roared the monster.

Aunt Dotti was just taking a cake out the oven for tea. Hearing the noise, she turned her head and looked up.

“That’s Mr Titch,” she said to herself. “I must introduce him to the children.” Then she went back to her cake.

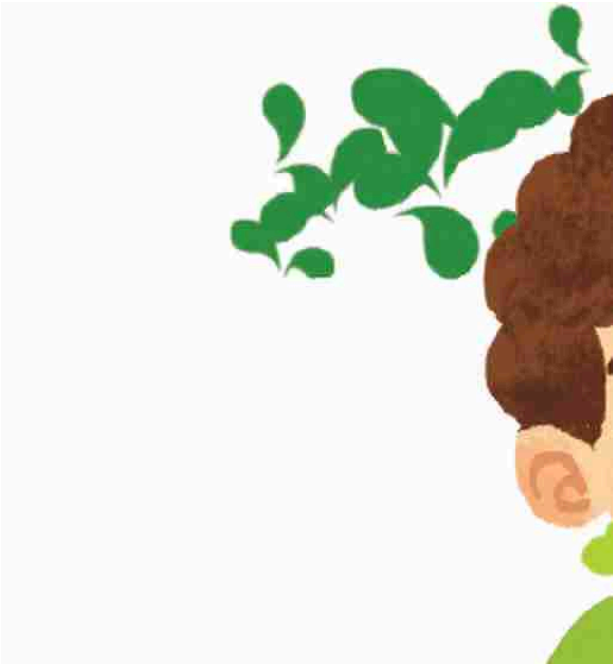
Meanwhile, Ginger was shaking with fright. He had heard the “Hreee- uh!” too and was hiding behind a bush. His body was hidden but his legs stuck out. A big, slobbery thing rolled over them – a slug-like grey tongue was licking his legs! Then off it slurped, leaving his knees covered in glistening slime. “Yuk!” he squealed.

Trolly hid beside a tree trunk as the thing lumbered away into the shadows. As soon as it was out of sight, he jumped down. “It’s a huge boulder,” he said, “crushing everything in its path!”

Back in the kitchen, Aunt Dotti had just finished decorating her cake with strawberries. She put it on a plate and carried it into the garden. “Come on, children!” she hollered.

Relieved to hear their aunt, they crashed through the trees toward her voice. “Help! A monster!”

“A monster?” said Aunt Dotti in surprise.



“It was a massive, slimy slug,” said Ginger.

“It was an alien with a big, brown eye,” insisted Molly.

“It was like a giant boulder, rolling through the wood and crushing everything in its path,” argued Trolly.

“No! It was the biggest snake ever,” cried Freddy.

“It was a huge grey log monster!” piped up little Nutt.

“Hmm!” Aunt Dotti tried to speak, but she was drowned out by the clamour of arguing children. Finally, when no-one could hear what anyone was saying because everyone was shouting at the same time, Aunt Dotti whistled very loudly. The children fell silent.

“What if each of you is right?” Aunt Dotti asked.

“We can’t all be right! There must have been five monsters,” said Ginger, glancing warily at the trees.

“Let’s think,” said Aunt Dotti. “What would you get if you made all five of your monsters into one big one?”

The children shuddered at the thought of the terrifying monster that would make, but Aunt Dotti laughed.

“Look!” she said, pointing toward the wood.

The children turned and gasped. A wrinkly, grey elephant was rolling through the trees on his big, stumpy feet. His brown eyes sparkled like gemstones and his slippery tongue lolled out of his mouth as he rumbled along like a boulder, happily swinging his long trunk.

“I’d like you to meet my old friend Mr Titch,” beamed Aunt Dotti. “I should have warned you, he always wanders over from the circus on the other side of the wood when he smells me baking cakes!”

“Hreee-uh!” said Mr Titch in agreement.



“We were *all* right!” laughed Freddy. “We each saw different parts of Mr Titch!”

“I’m sorry,” said Molly. “I should have listened to you.”

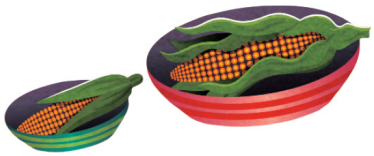
“We should have listened to each other,” said Ginger.

“At least he’s not a real monster,” whispered Nutt.

“Hreee-uh!” said the elephant, and he picked up a slice of Aunt Dotti’s cake with his trunk and ate it in one gulp.







THE ELEPHANT AND THE DOG

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about an elephant – a royal elephant, no less – who belonged to the king and had the privilege of leading all the king's processions. His name was Rajah and he lived in great luxury. But this didn't make up for his being the *only* royal elephant, which at times meant that he felt very lonely without anyone to keep him company – that is, until one day he made the most unlikely friend. Do you want to know who? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... Rajah's evening routine consisted of having a long, cool bath before his keeper gave him dinner. Once he had eaten, he would pace around his compound and look at the sunset. Then, when the twinkling stars had arrived in the velvet night sky, he would go to bed.

However, one evening, when he had just finished his dinner, he noticed that he was being watched through the gate to his compound by a little white dog. The dog was skinny and had a hungry look about it.

"Mr Elephant, sir," said the little dog in a quiet voice, "I'm sorry to ask but please may I eat the food that you've left? I'm very hungry."

"Of course," said Rajah kindly.

So, the little dog crept under the gate and ran across to the elephant's food bowl to eat the left-overs. He ate them up in double-quick time, thanked the elephant and then scampered away into the night.

The same thing happened the next night, and the next, until one evening when the dog arrived, Rajah asked, "My friend, would you like to come and share my dinner every night? I live alone and would enjoy your company." The little dog was overjoyed and happily accepted this kind offer. What a strange sight they made: a huge great elephant sitting having his dinner with a little white dog!

Now, the elephant's keeper didn't think that the little dog was a very suitable companion for the royal elephant, so he did his best to shoo him away each night. But much to the elephant's delight, the little fellow kept coming back. And as the elephant keeper was a lazy man, he soon gave up and allowed him to stay. Before long, Rajah and Snowflake (as the elephant called him) were inseparable. When the elephant went for his evening bath, the dog would go with him and they would play together in the water. Afterward, they would have their dinner and then talk and talk, as friends do. And, of course, they laughed a lot, too. Then, when it was time for bed, Snowflake would curl up next to Rajah. It was a great friendship.

But then one day, as a farmer was returning home from his fields, he saw the two animals playing together and approached the elephant keeper, saying, "That looks like a clever little dog. I would love to buy him. How much do you want for him?"



The elephant keeper saw this as the ideal opportunity not only to get rid of the little dog at last, but also to make himself some extra money, so he made a deal with the farmer, who took Snowflake straightaway.

With his friend gone, Rajah felt very lonely and sad. Little by little, he lost his appetite – he didn't feel like eating alone. In fact, he didn't really want to do anything much. He just stood looking over the fence in the direction that the little dog had been taken. When evening came and it was bath time, he refused to go in the water, and he didn't even notice the sunset or the stars as they shone in the clear night sky.

After a week of this strange behaviour, the elephant keeper started to get really worried about him. So he told the king about Rajah, who sent his very own doctor to have a look at him. The doctor carefully examined the elephant. "Well, I can find nothing wrong with him. He doesn't appear sick, he just seems very sad."

"Yes, he does," replied the keeper.

“Mmm, well people and animals don’t usually get sad without good reason,” said the doctor wisely. “Has anything happened recently? Have there been any changes in his life?”

“Not really ... although he used to play every evening with a skinny little dog, who was bought recently by a local farmer.”

“When did this occur?” asked the doctor.

“Oh, it must have been nearly a week ago, now,” said the keeper sheepishly.

“And when did he go off his food and stop bathing?” asked the doctor.

“Uh ... around about then, I suppose,” said the keeper, feeling embarassed that he hadn’t made the connection.

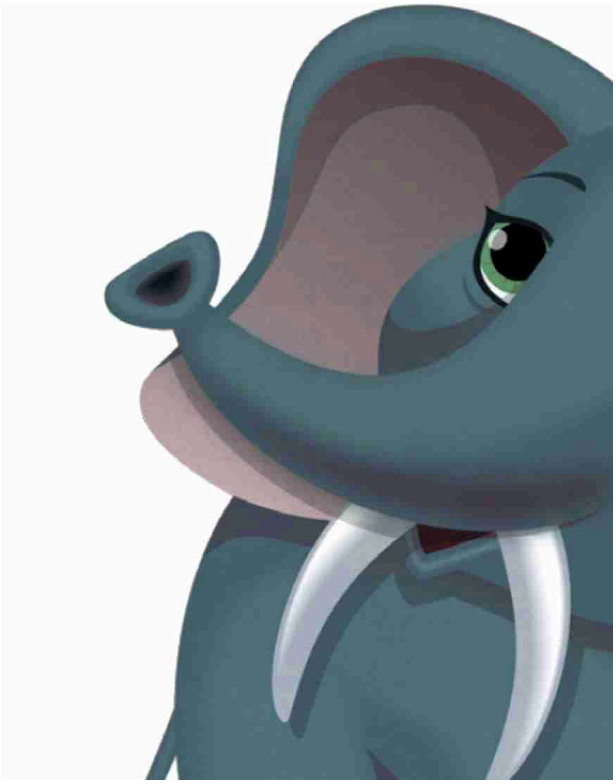
“Well, there you have it, he must be sad because he’s missing his friend.”

“Oh dear, I wish I hadn’t been so quick to sell the little dog. I just thought they made such an odd pair! I’ll try to find him but, to be honest, I don’t know where the farmer lives,” said the keeper feebly.

When the doctor reported this news back at the palace, the king sent word throughout his kingdom that a reward would be paid for the dog’s return. On hearing of this, the farmer at once set out with the dog to claim his reward. And as soon as they entered the palace gates, Snowflake saw his friend, Rajah, and, barking with joy, ran over to him as fast as his short legs could carry him.

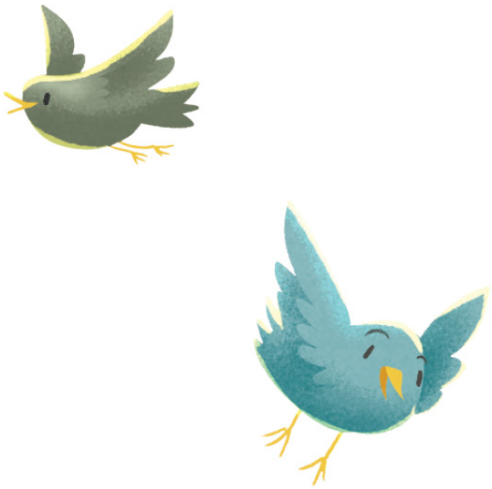
The elephant was overjoyed to see his little friend again. He picked him up with his long trunk, placed him on top of his head and marched off for his bath. That night, the two friends shared their dinner again and Rajah was happy once more. The next day, the elephant keeper had a special bowl made for Snowflake so that he knew he was welcome to stay for ever. And at the next court event,

people marvelled at the little white dog who sat on the royal elephant’s head at the front of the king’s procession.




WE ALL NEED
WHOM TO SH
TIMES AND MEN
HELP US IN TIM





CRYSTAL AND THE PIXIE

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a little girl called Crystal. One day, she had an extraordinary adventure. What do you think happened? Let's read the story and find out.

Crystal's head had been thumping for two whole days and she felt hot and shivery all over. "It's not fair!" she croaked. "I want to go to Gloria's party this afternoon."

"I'm sorry, sweetheart. You're not well enough," said Dad. "You need to stay in bed for another day, at least."

Crystal burst into tears. She'd been looking forward to the party so much. "Gloria's my best friend and I wanted to wear my lovely new dress," she sobbed.

"I know," said Dad as he plumped her pillow. "But just try to rest. Perhaps you'll feel brighter after that." Tears ran down Crystal's hot

cheeks, but soon she fell asleep.

And as she slept she had the strangest dream ...

A pixie in a rainbow-coloured waistcoat floated toward her on a cloud. “Don’t cry!” he said kindly, and he patted the cloud so that Crystal could sit beside him. “Sometimes it helps to talk to someone about your problems. Do you want to tell me what’s up?”

In the dream, Crystal was wearing her beautiful new party dress. The little pixie seemed very kind, so Crystal snuffled back her tears and told him everything: “I have a sore head and my tummy hurts. I can’t stop crying because it’s my best friend’s party and Dad says I can’t go. I have to stay in bed and it’s just not fair! I’m going to be in bed for the rest of my life, I know it!” As she talked, tears started rolling down her cheeks again.

“Oh dear! It’s a good job I’m a magic pixie,” he said. “I’m sure I can make you feel better.”

“What do you mean?” said Crystal curiously. “Can you grant three magic wishes ...?”

The pixie smiled. “Something like that. What would you wish for?”

“That’s easy!” said Crystal, holding up her fingers. “One, I wish I wasn’t ill. Two, I wish I didn’t feel so upset. And three ... I wish I could go to the party!”

Without a moment’s hesitation, the pixie said: “Well, all you have to do is find a handkerchief to dry those tears.”

“Is that all?” asked Crystal. This really was a wonderful dream. “If I find a hanky, my wishes will come true?”

“Yes!” the pixie nodded. “But you have to get the hanky from someone who has never felt upset, sick or hurt – someone who has never cried.”

“I can do that! That’s easy!” said Crystal, hopping onto a rainbow at the edge of the cloud. She slid down it like a slide. “Dad is the

bravest man alive and Mum is never ill. I bet neither of them ever cries. Grown-ups don't cry."



Crystal peered in through her living-room window. Mum was passing Dad a tissue. They were watching a sad movie on TV and they were both crying. For a moment Crystal was upset she couldn't get her hanky from them, then she had an idea. "I know! I'll phone Uncle Theo instead. He's a police officer, so I bet he's never cried!"

A jolly-looking sunflower appeared and passed Crystal a phone. But when she called up Uncle Theo, he told her he did sometimes cry – like when his son Blue went off to college and he missed him. So she racked her brains to figure out who else she could phone.

One by one, she tried them. Aunt Jenny, the firefighter; Cousin Peter, who was studying to be a nurse; and even Miss Ingram, her teacher. But they all told her about times in their lives when they'd felt so hurt or upset that they'd cried. Finally, Crystal spotted Grandpa. He was floating past on a cloud, merrily waving his walking stick at her.

“Hi there!” she called. Surely Grandpa was far too wise to cry. But even he said he got sad and frustrated enough to cry at times, like when Grandma Josephine had passed away, or his arthritis got very painful.

“I try to let myself be upset for only a little while though,” he said, kissing her as he floated away. “You know, sadness is part of life.”

“Any luck finding that handkerchief?” said the little pixie, sliding down the rainbow to join her.

Crystal shook her head. “I can’t find anyone who has never been upset, sick or hurt. Even the grown-ups!”

“You see, Crystal, everybody hurts and cries at times,” said the pixie. “The important thing to remember is that sadness and disappointment will pass. If you have to miss a party, it’s not the end of the world. Think about something fun you and your friend can do together to celebrate her birthday when you feel better instead.”

Crystal nodded. “Maybe Gloria and I can have a special party of our own with our favourite cake,” she said. “I could even still wear my lovely new dress.”

“Exactly,” said the pixie. But he was starting to fade away in a swirl of colours. The next thing Crystal knew, Dad was offering her a drink of water as she woke up.

“You slept for a long time,” he said as she sat up to take the drink. “Do you feel any better?”

“A bit,” said Crystal, stretching. “I had a weird dream.” Then she looked at her father strangely. “Dad, do you ever cry at things you see on TV?”

“Like a baby!” Dad blushed. “There’s an old black-and-white movie that Mum and I love, but it always makes us cry! We get through a box of tissues when we watch it.” Crystal squeezed his hand. “To tell the truth, I often feel better after a good cry!” said Dad.

“I know what you mean,” agreed Crystal. “I’m still sad to miss Gloria’s party, but I know this feeling won’t last for ever. It’s like that wise pixie said, nothing lasts for ever. I’ll stop feeling ill soon, and I know I’ll stop feeling sad, too.”

“That’s very true,” said Dad. “Clever girl.” But he scratched his head. “What wise pixie?”

Crystal laughed. “Oh, just a new friend I met in my dream. We had a real adventure. Sit down and I’ll tell you all about it.” And, feeling much better already, that’s exactly what she did.





WE ALL FEEL
TIME TO TIME
OF LIFE. A





THE QUAILS AND THE HUNTER

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a flock of quails, who lived happily in the leafy hedgerows and woods. That is, until one day, when a hunter came along. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... the hunter was a clever man, who made his living from catching quails. He would hide behind a hedgerow and imitate the quails' call, and they would answer him. When a good number of birds had gathered together nearby, he would throw a net over them to catch them. Then, he would take some home to his wife to cook and sell the rest at market for a good price.

The quails were led by a wise old bird called Tutt Tutt, who decided that something had to be done about the hunter. He realized that to protect his flock he would have to outsmart the hunter, so he devised a plan. One morning he called the quails together. "Every day the hunter lures more of us into his trap. Soon none of us will be left. We must do something to protect ourselves. I have a plan. If we work together, we can escape him and his wicked net. The next time

the hunter catches any of us, we must all fly up together from the ground when I give the call. That way, we'll be able to lift the net and get away. But for this plan to work, we *must* all co-operate." Everyone agreed that this was a great plan.

That very afternoon the hunter returned, hid by the hedgerow and imitated the quail's call. Once again, the birds fell for his trick, and he threw his net over them, as always. But this time, they knew what to do! As soon as they heard Tutt Tutt's signal, they all flapped their wings as hard as they could until they rose up into the air. The plan had worked! Their combined strength had lifted the net, which they then dropped into a large, prickly thorn bush.

The hunter didn't catch *one* quail that day. Each time he tried to capture the birds, they escaped and he ended up spending hours getting scratched and pricked while retrieving his net. When, finally, he gave up and went home, his wife was furious to see him arrive empty-handed. "Where are the quails for our dinner?" she snapped.

"Those birds outwitted me today – they worked together as a team," he replied angrily. "But they won't co-operate with each other for long. They're quarrelsome creatures and they'll soon fall out. Then they won't be able to lift my net anymore. That's when I'll catch them!"

Sure enough, one day soon, when the quails were singing in the hedgerow, one of them accidently sat on his neighbour's head and a big squabble broke out. Tutt Tutt begged them to resolve their dispute, but they wouldn't listen. Suddenly he saw the hunter, ready to pounce! Tutt Tutt realized that if the birds couldn't work together, then they would have to escape *before* the hunter cast his net. He told the flock to fly at once! Most of them rose immediately, but the quarrelsome quails were left behind – and were promptly caught.

Tutt Tutt's flock continued to work as a team, outwitting the hunter so often that eventually he gave up trying to catch them.









THE BEAR WHO LEARNED TO WAIT

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a bear who set out to find himself a new home. Where do you think he ended up living? Let's read the story and find out.

Deep in the heart of an emerald forest grew a great fig tree. Its branches brimmed with delicious fruit and luscious leaves that provided food and shelter for the many animals that made the tree their home.

One day, a young brown bear called Toby passed by. He had grown too big to live with his parents in their cave anymore, so he had left the mountains in search of a new home of his own.

The moment he saw the lush, green fig tree, he knew it would make the perfect home. "This is the place!" he said to himself, scratching his back on the knobbly trunk. The thick, tangled leaves gave plenty of shade for him to nap in when the sun was fierce, and

the branches bore all the fruit a small bear could ever need to fill his tummy.

“Welcome!” squawked a clever, brightly coloured parrot called Pip, who lived in the branches above. She perched on Toby’s shoulder and asked him all about his mum and dad and the cave where he used to live. As the days passed, Pip told him about her many adventures flying through the forest. Soon, the two were the best of friends and Toby was never lonely. He was very happy indeed with his lovely new home.

Then, after Toby had lived beneath the tree for some months, he noticed a change. The leaves began to fall and the fruit started to shrivel up. One morning, he woke up very hot and bothered. The branches above him were almost totally bare, and the bright sun was pouring down onto his fur making him far too warm to sleep.

“What has happened?” he asked as Pip fluttered down from the bare branches. “Is our tree dying?”

“The tree is thirsty,” Pip replied. “We have to wait for the rains to come, then the leaves will grow back and you’ll have all your shade again.”

But Toby wanted his shade back straight away. “I can’t stay here!” he wailed. “It was never this hot in my parents’ cave. I need to be cool!” He stomped off down the forest path. A little way off he found a thorn bush. The branches were prickly, but there were quite a few leaves. “This will be my new home!” he said.

Toby tried to settle down under the thorn bush, but the leaves were too small to provide proper shade, and he was just as hot as he’d been beneath the fig tree. Even worse, the prickles caught in his fur. When Pip came to visit that night, she had to peck them out, one by one.

“Come back to the tree,” she said kindly. “It’s your home. It won’t be long before the rains arrive.”

“Rains?” said Toby, glancing at the sky. “I don’t see any rains.” And off he went further down the path until he came across a hollow log.



“This will be my home now,” he said. “I can crawl inside it and stay out of the sun.” But the log was cramped. As he tried to sleep, squashed and uncomfortable, Toby realized he had no one to talk to. He missed Pip and all the other birds and animals who lived in the fig tree. “This is silly,” he told himself. “Pip is right. I should just be patient and wait for the rain.”



The next morning, he wandered back to the fig tree to visit his friends. Pip perched on his shoulder and, while they talked, she made Toby a beautiful broad-rimmed hat out of dry leaves to help keep her friend cool. But Toby soon became cross again. “It’s no good!” he complained. “Even your clever hat can’t keep me cool in this burning heat. I’ve had enough!” He leapt to his feet, sending poor Pip flying up into the air.

Toby stretched up his paws and grabbed the tree by a low branch. “Hurry up and grow leaves again,” he shouted, tugging at the branch. But as he tugged, the whole branch cracked and came off in his paws.

“Careful!” cried Pip. “The tree is dry! You have to be patient. You can’t hurry nature.”

Toby knew he shouldn’t have hurt the tree. He tossed the branch aside. “It’s too hot here. I need a nap!” he said, and he trudged back to his lonely, cramped log.

He stayed in the log for what seemed a very long time. Some days Pip would visit him to tell him the news from the fig tree, but often Toby would just sit and wait, all alone. He thought the rains would never come. Then, one morning, he poked his head out of the log and felt something cold and wet land on the end of his nose – plop! It was a raindrop! Then ... plop! plop! plop!

A clap of thunder echoed across the sky. The drops came faster until the rain was pouring down in torrents. Toby ran back to the fig tree. “Pip, you were right!” he cried. “The rains *have* come.”

“You see!” Pip laughed, as they sheltered together in the roots of the fig tree. “You just had to be patient.”

After several long, wet days, a thick, luscious canopy had grown like an umbrella above Toby’s head.

But he still wasn’t happy. “Pip!” he cried impatiently, on the fifth day of rain. “How long will this go on for?” His bed was wet and water kept plip-plopping through the twigs and branches above and trickling down his ears.

“Only a little longer.” Pip ruffled her wet feathers. “If you can’t wait, you can always go back to the prickly thorn bush or your lonely log,” she teased.

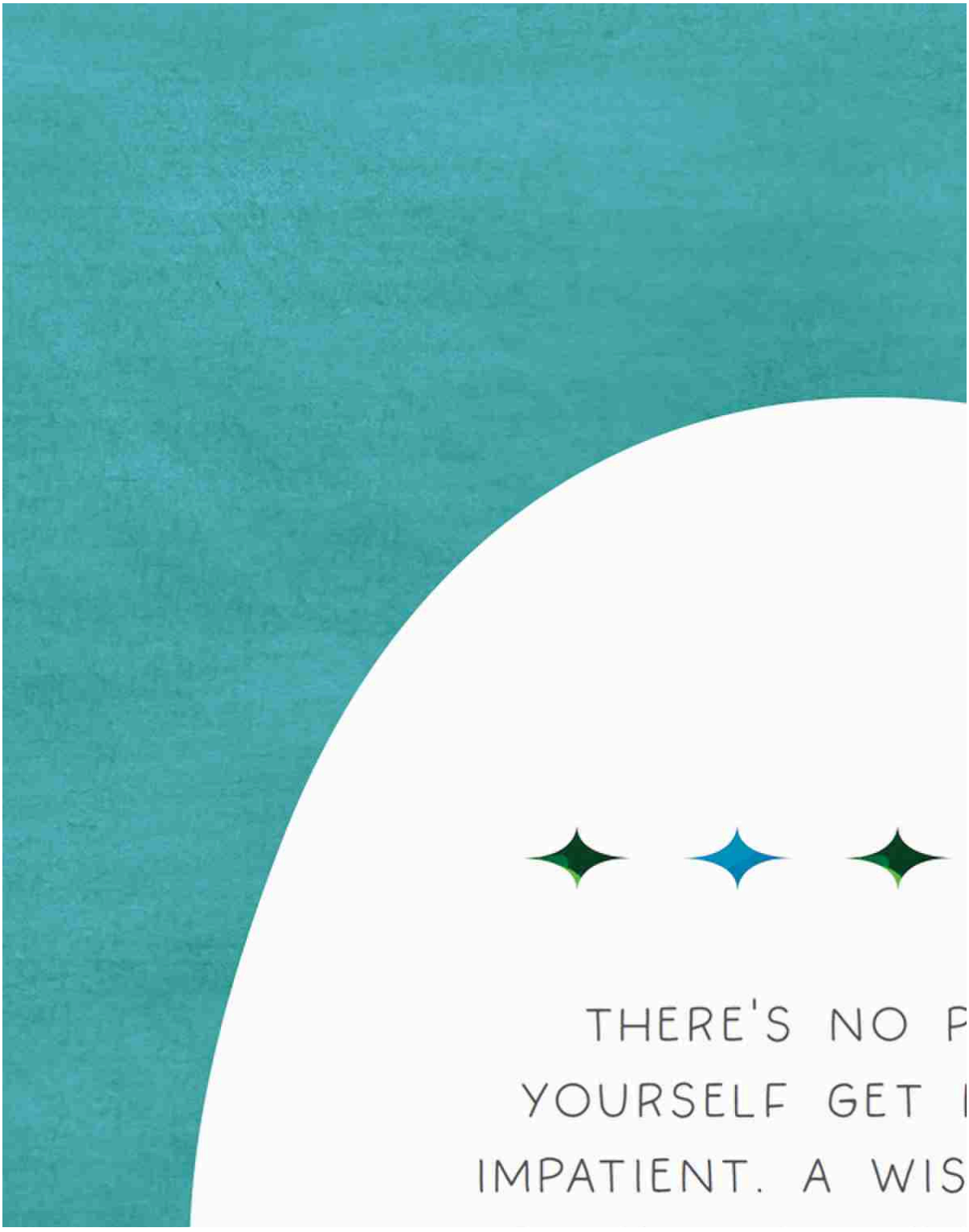
“No way!” said Toby. “I’m staying here with you. You told me to be patient when it was hot and dry and you were right. You will probably be right this time, too!” He picked up the old sun hat Pip had made him and put it on his head to keep the rain off his nose.

Two days later the sun came out. The tree looked just as fresh and beautiful as it had on the very first day Toby had decided to make it his home. “Perfect!”

Toby sighed as he lay down and relaxed in the cool shade of the bright new leaves. Pip chattered away above his head. “I told you you needed to be patient!” she squawked, seeing how happy he

was. “Yes,” replied Toby, closing his eyes and smiling. “This is well worth the wait.”




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THE PRINCESSES AND THE KINGSHUK TREE

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about four princesses who lived in a grand palace in a distant land. They were very curious girls, so when they heard about a tree of breathtaking beauty, they longed to see it. But this was no ordinary tree – it was a magic tree. Do you want to know why? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... the young princesses had been well educated about everything in their own land – especially about all the animals, flowers and trees that could be found there. They even had a zoo in the palace, with exotic birds and animals from all over the world. And the collection of trees and flowers in the palace gardens was said to be beyond compare. So the princesses were very surprised one day to hear the gardener mention a special tree in the palace grounds, known as the Kingshuk, as none of them had ever come across it. The princesses were so intrigued by what they heard that they were determined to see it. That very day, after their lessons, they went to

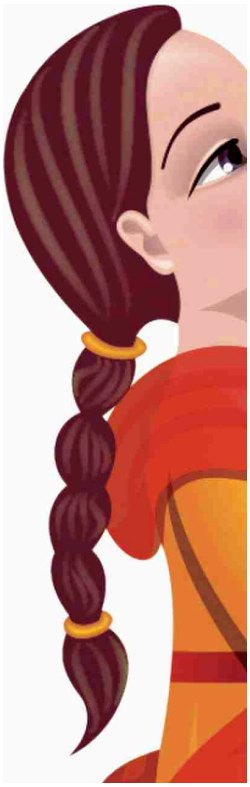
find the gardener and asked him to take them to see this wonderful tree.

“It would be my pleasure, your Highnesses!” said the gardener. “But the Kingshuk Tree is a magic tree: people can only see it on their birthday. The rest of the time it is invisible. So I will only be able to take you one at a time, and you will each have to wait until your birthday.”

The princesses agreed and decided that it was only right and proper for the eldest to go first.

And so it was that on the eldest princess’s birthday, a bright spring morning, the gardener and the girl set out to find the Kingshuk Tree. After walking for a while, they came to the edge of the royal forest where the gardener said that it grew. The princess saw a tall, willowy tree standing apart, but the gardener could see nothing, so she knew that this was indeed the magical Kingshuk. She stood entranced by the beautiful tree: its small green leaves were unfurling like sparkling emeralds and the princess was filled with its joyful energy. As they left, the gardener asked her not to talk about what had happened so that she wouldn’t spoil the tree’s magic for her sisters.

As spring rolled into summer, the second eldest princess celebrated her birthday and the gardener took her to find the Kingshuk Tree. She gasped when she saw it, for it was an explosion of deep-red blossoms, glowing like rubies. The princess swooned as she smelled the heavenly perfume of the magic flowers, which filled her with a great sense of happiness. The gardener asked her, too, not to discuss the tree until all the girls had seen it.



The hot summer days were turning to autumn when the gardener brought the third princess to see the Kingshuk Tree on her birthday. Her eyes widened when she saw its boughs crammed with luscious purple fruits, which hung from the tree like giant amethysts. The magic tree was so enticing that she felt as if it were feeding her with its goodness and generosity. And once again, the gardener asked her, like her sisters, not to talk about the tree until all four princesses had seen it.

Finally, as winter chased the last autumn leaves from the trees, the birthday of the fourth and youngest princess arrived. Now the gardener took her, too, to visit the Kingshuk Tree. She asked to be taken at night as she wanted to see it in the moonlight. And, sure enough, its silvery branches, wet with dew, looked spectacular and sparkled as if they were dressed in silver threads laced with tiny

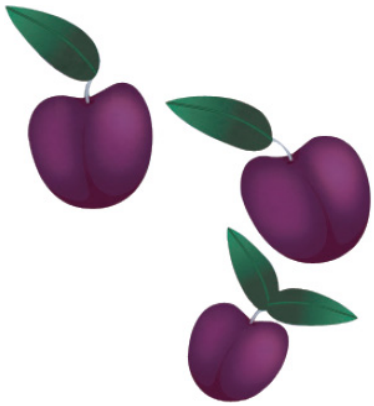
diamonds. She felt as if the mystical tree was wrapping her in its warmth and magic.

The day after the youngest princess's visit, the four girls went to thank the gardener for taking them all to see the magical Kingshuk Tree. Relieved that they could discuss it among themselves at last, the eldest princess said, "I will never forget that beautiful tree with its tiny leaves shimmering like emeralds in the afternoon sun."

"But, sister, you must be mistaken!" cried the second oldest princess. "The Kingshuk Tree was covered in huge ruby-red blossoms and its heady perfume filled me with great feelings of happiness."



"Oh no, sisters, you are both quite wrong," insisted the third princess. "The Kingshuk Tree was heavy with luscious purple fruits, which sparkled like giant amethysts."



“Well, sisters, I think you must have seen different trees!” cried the youngest princess. “The Kingshuk’s branches were covered in threads of glittering dew that enchanted me with their magic.”

Had the sisters not been so well-mannered, there might have been an argument. But instead they simply wondered if they had seen four different trees.

The gardener laughed. “Your Highnesses,” he said calmly, “you have indeed each seen the same Kingshuk Tree and experienced its magic. But it was dressed for the season of your birthday when each of you visited. To truly appreciate the tree, you need to visit in all the seasons – which is, of course, impossible because of its invisibility!”

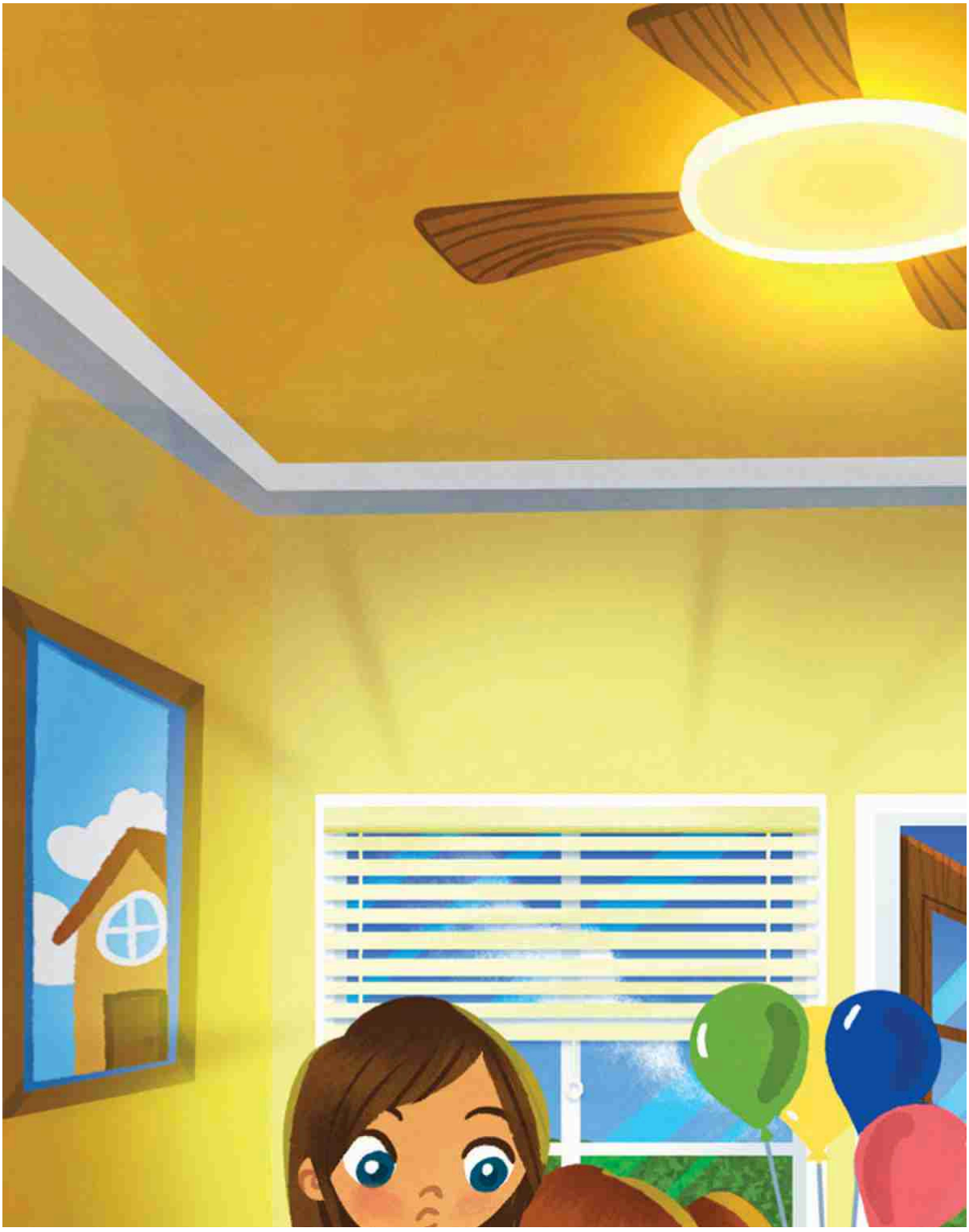
The princesses laughed. They had forgotten that each of their birthdays fell in a different part of the year and that the tree changed with the seasons. No wonder it had looked different on each visit!

The girls also realized that the only way they would be able to discover more about the magical Kingshuk Tree was by listening to – and learning from – each other and anyone else who’d been lucky enough to see it.





WHAT WE FI
NOT ALWAYS
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KNOWS THAT





BETHANY'S BICYCLE

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a girl called Bethany whose birthday present caused a lot of trouble. Why do you think that was? Let's read the story and find out.

Bethany had four older brothers and sisters, and they all lived together with their mother, father and grandfather. Most of Bethany's clothes and toys were hand-me-downs from her siblings. One day, just before her sixth birthday, Bethany's grandpa promised that she would get something special all of her own that year. And sure enough, when she came downstairs on the morning of her big day, she found an exciting parcel in the kitchen tied with an enormous red bow.

“Grandpa’s busy working in the shed, but he says you should go right ahead and open your gift without him,” said Dad.

Bethany tore open the paper to find the shiniest red bike she had ever seen. “Wow! Is it really mine?” she said.

“Of course,” said Dad.

Bethany’s brothers and sisters had been watching. “That’s not fair,” roared Paula, the eldest of the five children. “Why does she get a new bike? I don’t have one.”

“It’s not your birthday,” said Mum. “Now take Bethany to have a go on it outside and make sure you don’t go near any cars.”

But once they were outside, Gemma, Bethany’s other big sister, grabbed the bike. “Red is my favourite colour and that means I should ride it first.” Riley and Robbie, Bethany’s twin brothers, pushed her out the way as they chased after Gemma.

“Wait!” cried Bethany, running as fast as she could after them all. “Grandpa gave it to *me* – I’d like to ride it first! You can have a turn afterwards,” she said. But no one was listening.



“I bet I’m the fastest rider,” said Riley.

“I bet I’m faster than you,” said Robbie.

“*Please*,” said Bethany. “Can I have a go?”

No one took any notice. Riley snatched the bike from Gemma, leapt on the saddle and whizzed off down the street with Robbie

racing after him on foot.

“Come back!” she cried helplessly as they all pelted away. She had lost her present already.

“I’d better go and thank Grandpa, even if I never get to ride it,” she sighed. She found Grandpa in his shed. He was always in there, making new things or mending old ones. “Happy birthday!” he cried as he saw her coming. “Do you like your surprise?”

“Oh yes!” said Bethany, “I love it!” But as she spoke her voice wobbled and her eyes filled with tears.

“What’s wrong?” Grandpa put down his hammer.

Bethany burst into tears. “The others said it was unfair that I had something so special. They’ve all gone off with the bike. I want to share it with them but they won’t even let me have a go.”

“Oh, that’s not right!” said Grandpa.

“Gemma says the bike should be hers because she loves red. The twins say it should be theirs because they’re faster than me,” she sobbed. “Paula says I’m spoilt ...”

“Hmm! You’re not spoilt at all. It’s your birthday and you deserve that bike,” said Grandpa. “They’ve all had nice presents from me on their own birthdays in the past ... I know what to do.”

Then, he told Bethany his clever idea. “With your help, I’ll teach the others a bit of a lesson,” he said as he headed out of the house and down the street.

He found the bike lying on the street corner, while Bethany’s brothers and sisters stood nearby arguing over who should have the next go and who most deserved a new bike. He picked up the bike without any of them noticing, and carried it back to his shed.

That afternoon, after Bethany had blown out the candles on her cake and was happily scoffing a huge slice, Mum asked what had happened to her present.

“Well,” said Bethany, “as everyone started fighting over it, Grandpa took it back.”

“What a shame!” said Mum.

Bethany shrugged. “I’d rather have no bike than see everyone fighting over who should have it instead of me.”

The other children had stopped talking and were staring down at their plates.

“Oh, don’t worry,” said Bethany. “Grandpa promised he’d make sure that by the end of the day, there would be no need for anyone to be jealous.”

“Maybe we’re *all* getting new bikes!” cried Paula.

Just then the kitchen door opened. Grandpa came in, struggling with five carefully wrapped parcels in his arms.

“One for each of you,” he puffed. “Open them up.”

The children grinned. But as they opened their parcels, their expressions fell. Gemma had handlebars. Paula had pedals. The twins each had a wheel. And Bethany had a bell. There was silence. “What’s the matter?” said Grandpa. “Don’t you like your presents? You all thought it was so unfair that Bethany got a brand-new bike all to herself, I thought I’d give you each a little piece of it.”

The children looked sheepishly at Grandpa.

“Wheels are no use on their own,” said Riley and Robbie together. “I can’t ride just pedals,” said Paula. “And my handlebars have nothing to steer,” said Gemma. “Sorry for spoiling your birthday, Bethany,” she said. One by one, they each placed the pieces of the bike at Bethany’s feet.

“Please can you put my bike back together again, Grandpa?” she asked.

An hour later, Grandpa returned with the shiny, new bike, all put together again. “I’m afraid there’s one thing missing,” he said.

“What?” asked Bethany in dismay.

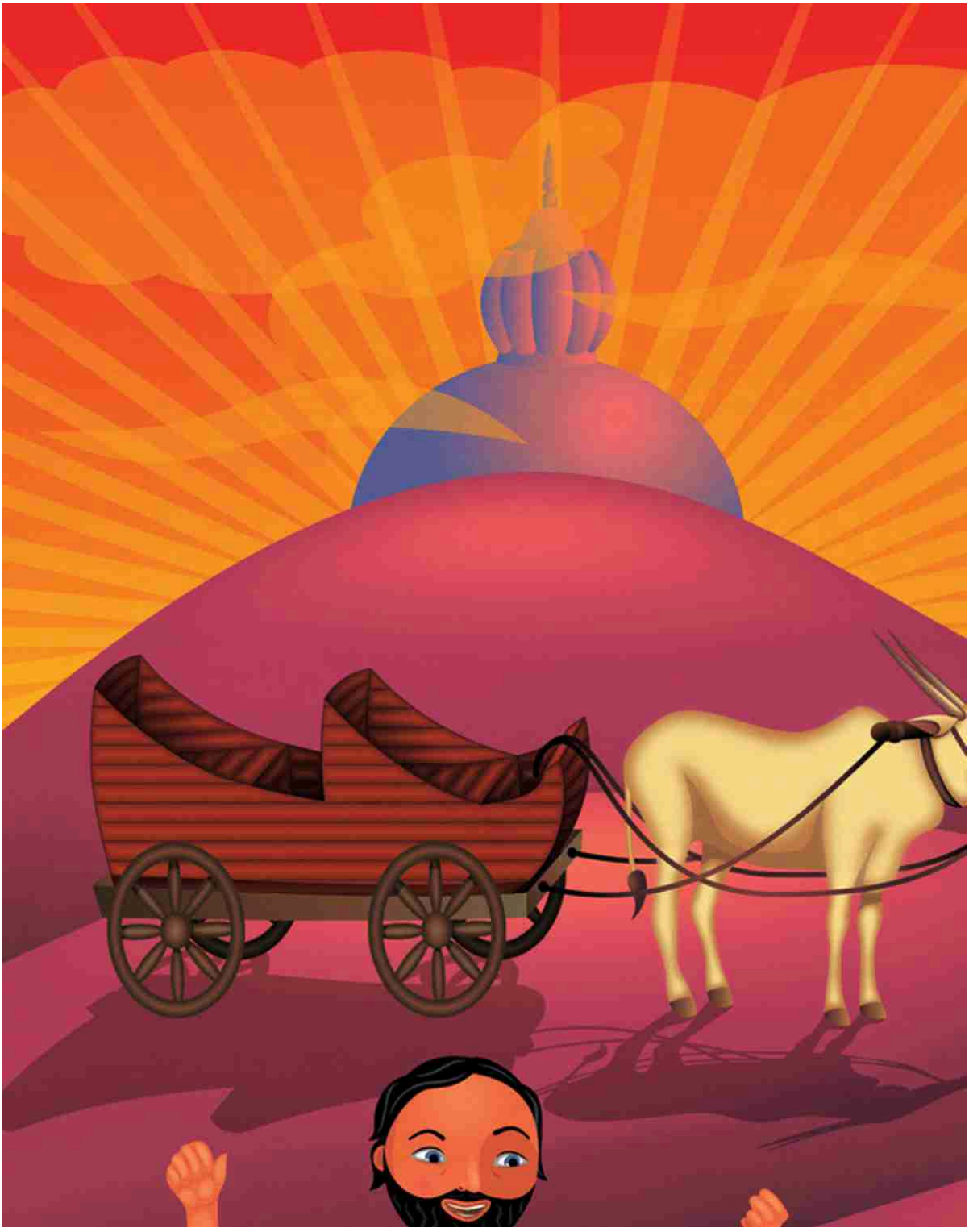
“That!” Grandpa smiled, pointing at the bell Bethany was holding. He attached it to the handlebars and handed over the bike. “Happy birthday!” he said.

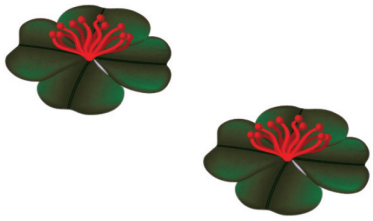
“Thanks, Grandpa,” said Bethany. “You can all have a turn in a minute,” she said to her siblings. “But it’s my go first!” And with a ding of her bell, off she pedalled.





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ABOUT SOM
POSSESSION
MAKE US SAD.





THE DESERT SPRING

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a poor family who were travelling to a rich cousin's wedding in a beautiful temple, far away. Do you want to know what happened on the journey? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... the family had made good progress so far, passing through many towns and villages in their little cart, but suddenly they arrived at the edge of a vast and ferociously hot desert. Worried, they asked the local people for advice on how to cross it. Everyone said the same thing – not to go anywhere near it in the daytime, but instead to cross it at night, when the hot sun was resting harmlessly in bed. "But how would we know where to go in the dark?" asked the father of the family.

"Navigate by the stars," replied the locals.

"That's all very well," he thought. "But I don't know much about the stars. We need to find someone who does, to guide us."

So he asked around and soon found a young man who was said to be one of the best navigators in the region.

That night, after darkness had fallen over the land and the sands had become cooler, the family set out on their journey. The navigator

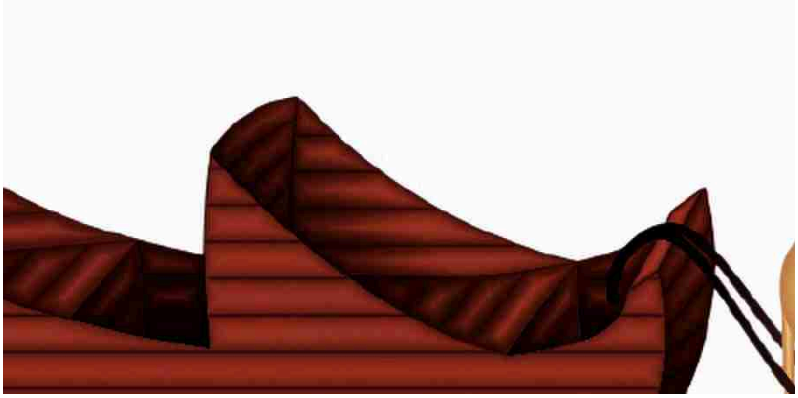
took over the reins of the bullock and sat tall and proud in the cart. Gazing up into the clear night sky, he read the stars and directed them eastward.

However, he had enjoyed a very large dinner, not to mention a huge cup of hot chocolate, before setting out, and these were making him feel very drowsy. Before long, the gentle rocking of the cart had soothed him into a deep slumber, without any of the passengers, who were also asleep, realizing what had happened. Of course, the bullock leading the cart couldn't read the stars, so, with the navigator sleeping, it wandered aimlessly – in completely the wrong direction. When the father awoke with the first light, he realized they were well and truly lost!

"Where are we?" exclaimed his wife, when she awoke. Surely we should have nearly crossed the desert by now? We're going to be late for the wedding!" When they saw that the navigator was sound asleep, they were very angry with him, but their anger soon turned to fear. "A whole day in the desert!" the children wailed. "We'll run out of water! What are we going to do?" they cried.

The father took charge and tried to calm them down. "Don't worry," he said, "we'll find a way out of this."

Pacing back and forth, he thought and thought. Then, he sat down on the sands and gazed into the distance. There must be something he could do ... Suddenly, he noticed a tiny green plant growing in the sand beside a rock. "Aha! Something *does* grow here in these hot, dry sands, after all. And where there are plants, there must be at least a little water!" he concluded.



He called the young, fit navigator over and showed him the plant. “I want you to dig here, as I think there must be water nearby,” he instructed. The navigator looked at him doubtfully, but as he had got them into this trouble, he was in no position to argue, so he got a spade from the cart and started digging.

He dug and he dug – hour after hour. The hole became deeper and deeper, but still there was no water. The navigator was now very hot and thirsty. Suddenly, he hit something:

“We’ve hit a rock!” he cried. “All I’ve found is an enormous, dry boulder. What a waste of time!”

The rest of the family looked very disheartened. But the father of the family was not a man to give up easily, so urged them not to lose hope. “Don’t give up now. We can’t! If we give up now, we will all be lost. While we still have energy, and before it gets any hotter, we must keep trying. Think how our cousin will feel if we don’t turn up for her wedding.”

A silence fell over everyone. They all felt so tired and thirsty that they didn’t even have the energy to protest. The head of the family sat on the rock and looked around. Then, in the silence, he heard, or, at least, thought he heard, the faint sound of running water. “Am I hearing things?” he wondered.

“Listen carefully! I’m sure I can hear water! Can you hear it, too?” he asked.

“What? Has the heat gone to your head and made you crazy?” snapped his wife.

“No, listen, I’m *sure* I can hear water,” he said excitedly, “and it seems to be coming from the rock. Strike the rock!” he commanded.

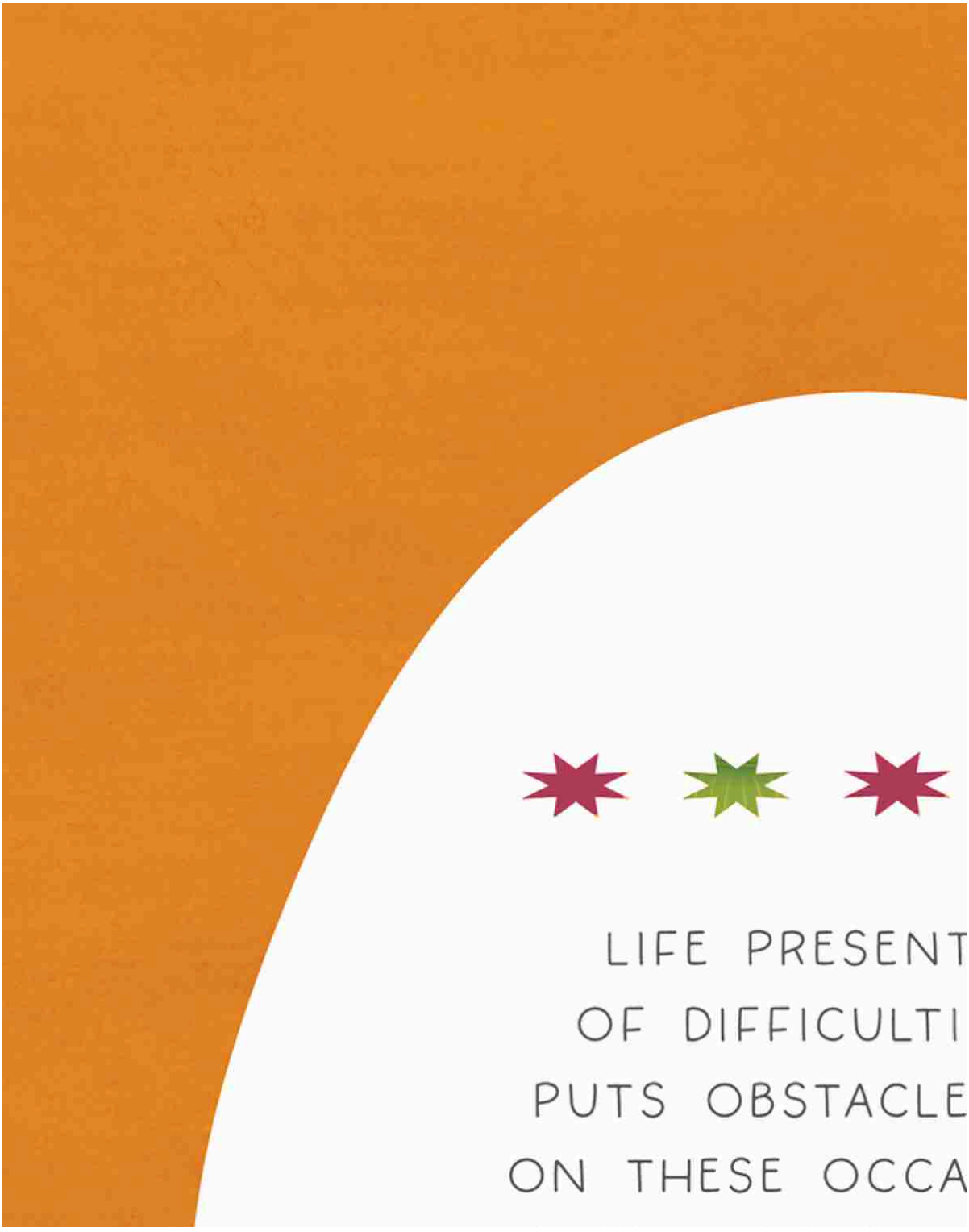
The navigator got a mallet and began to hit the rock. At first nothing happened, but then, all of a sudden, the rock split open, and, to everyone’s surprise and relief, water started to bubble up out of it in a refreshing fountain.

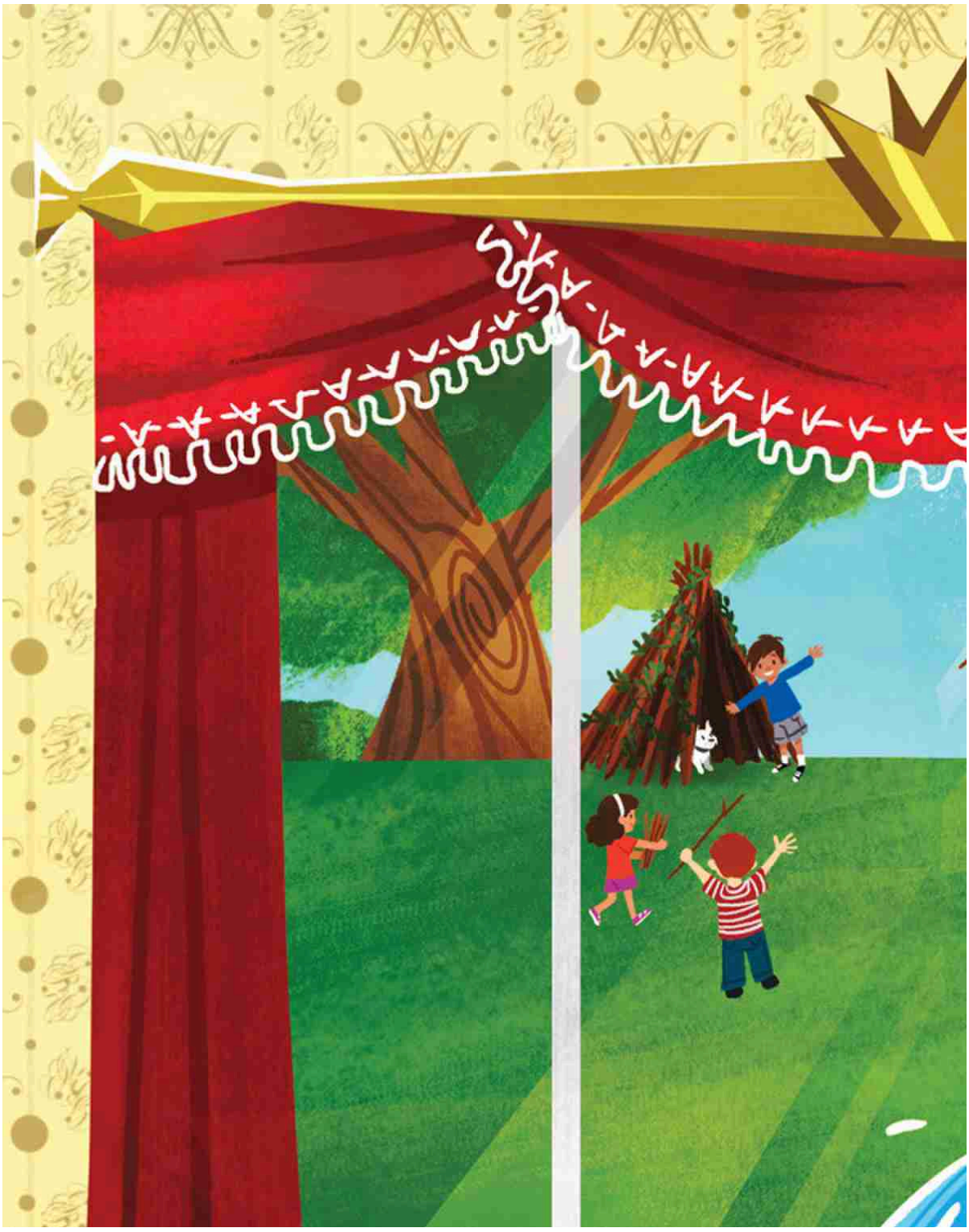
A great cheer went up as they all rushed forward to drink some cool, fresh water. The family danced for joy, hugging each other and laughing. Now they had plenty of water. They gave the bullock water to drink and filled up all their containers for the rest of the journey.

Relieved and refreshed, the party set off once more after the sun had set. As the moon climbed high into the starlit sky, the navigator guided them safely across the desert, and they finally arrived at the temple after dawn, still in time for their cousin’s wedding.

A few hours later, dressed in their finest clothes, they were tucking into a delicious banquet in honour of their beautiful cousin and her new husband. Watching his family enjoy themselves, the father smiled fondly to himself as he silently toasted them with his glass of crystal-clear water. How glad he was that he hadn’t given up on them all in the desert.




LIFE PRESENT
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THE SPOILT PRINCE

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a young prince who was given everything he ever wanted. How happy do you think he was? Let's read the story and find out.

Prince Percival was spoilt. "I want roller skates!" he would cry. And he would get them! If he asked for a golden rocking horse, he got one. If he asked for two golden rocking horses, he got both ... and a ride-on train, a dartboard and a telescope too. And clothes, sweet treats, fancy gadgets – you name it, he got it.

The king and queen adored their son. They were so often away on royal duties that they wanted to give him anything and everything he asked for so that he knew just how much they loved him. "No good

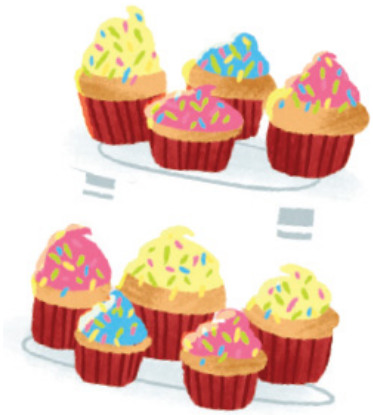
will come of it!" said Percival's nanny. "He has far too much already. And still he's never happy!" But nobody listened to her.

"I'm bored. I need something new to play with," said Percival, chomping down another cupcake.

"It's not some*thing* new you need," said Nanny, "but some*one*. You need friends, not toys and cake."

"But there are no other children in the palace," he said, "and the children in the village are so different. Anyway, they don't know me. They have each other; they don't need me. I'm all alone."

"Nonsense! See the children making a den?" She pointed out of the window. "Such fun! Go and join them."



"No. I'll get my new clothes muddy. I'll ask someone to bring me a trampoline instead." Within minutes the trampoline arrived and Percival bounced and bounced – and then felt sick. "This is hopeless!" he wailed. And he sat on the trampoline and began to cry.

Then he found he couldn't stop crying, and the more the tears poured, the more lonely he felt. What use were toys and clothes when he needed someone to comfort him? He went to the playroom to find Nanny, but she was too busy tidying away his toys to even notice him.

He sat on the windowsill and cried some more. In fact, he cried so much that his playroom filled with tears. Soon the toys and plates of food were bobbing like ships on the sea, and Nanny was floating on the toy train, using a tennis racket as an oar. “Stop crying or we’ll soon be drowned!” she said. But Percival just kept wailing. He wailed so loudly that he broke the glass in the window, and the tears whooshed out of the palace in a great, gushing river, taking the toys with it. “Help!” cried Percival. “My toys!” But the river swept him out the window, too. “Help!” he cried again. “I can’t swim!” How could he? The king and queen had been too busy with their duties to teach him.

The village children stopped in awe. Rushing past them were the most beautiful toys they’d ever seen. Then they heard Percival’s shouts. “Quick!” said one. And as Percival tumbled past, they caught him by his collar and hoisted him out of the water. Percival sat beside their den, muddy and wet.

“Thank you!” he exclaimed, forgetting that his toys were floating away. “You saved me!”

“Of course!” said the children. “Why wouldn’t we?”

“You don’t know me. You have each other; you don’t need me ...” said Percival. The children looked puzzled.

“The more the merrier!” said one. “We’d like to get to know you!” And for what felt like the first time in his life, Percival smiled a big smile. He picked up a stick and laid it on the den. “I’d like to get to know you, too,” he said.


POSSESSIONS
MAKE US TRU
WISE PERSON





THE LAZY WOOD GATHERER

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about Gabriel, a boy who lived in a small cottage on a cliff overlooking the sea. One day he got into big trouble with his parents. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

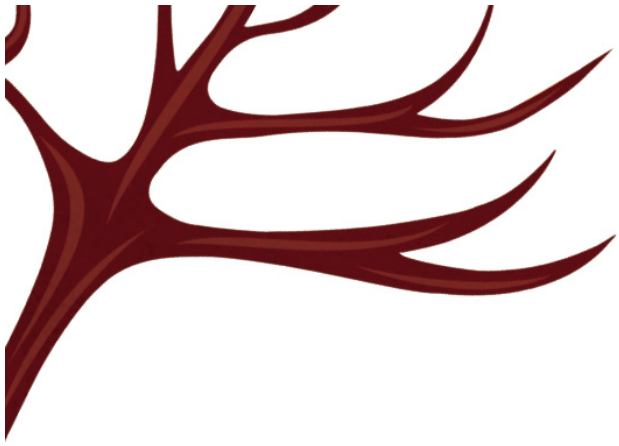
Now ... one sunny day, Gabriel's father, who was a fisherman, asked his son to gather firewood from the forest. They were going on a boat trip the next day to see the whales as a special treat, so they needed wood to light a fire and cook a hearty breakfast before setting off.

But that morning Gabriel was very tired. "It's not fair!" he muttered. "I don't want to gather wood. I just want to take it easy today." Nevertheless, he set off along the path that led to the forest. On his way up the path, he came to a lone tree that had no leaves.

"It's my lucky day!" he exclaimed. "This tree has no leaves and it looks perfect for firewood – dead and dry. I don't need to go all the way to the forest, like Father said. I can just rest here and then quickly snap off some branches before I go home." So he sat at the

foot of the tree and gazed at the sea spangling in the sunlight. Soon, he fell fast asleep.

Some time later, he awoke with a start – it was getting dark. “Oh no! How long have I been asleep?” he wondered. Jumping up, he climbed the tree and frantically began to break off branches. But, despite appearances, this wood wasn’t dead at all – it was green inside and full of sap. And the branches took so much pulling and twisting that one even snapped back and hit him in the eye. Ouch! When he had finally broken off enough branches, he bundled them into his arms, ran back home and piled them outside the house before he went in to bed.



Early next morning, Gabriel’s mother rose to prepare breakfast. She picked up the wood to start a fire. But the flames just flickered and died. When her husband came down, she still had no fire. “I’m sorry, breakfast’s not ready.” she said. “This wood is so green and damp that the fire won’t light.”

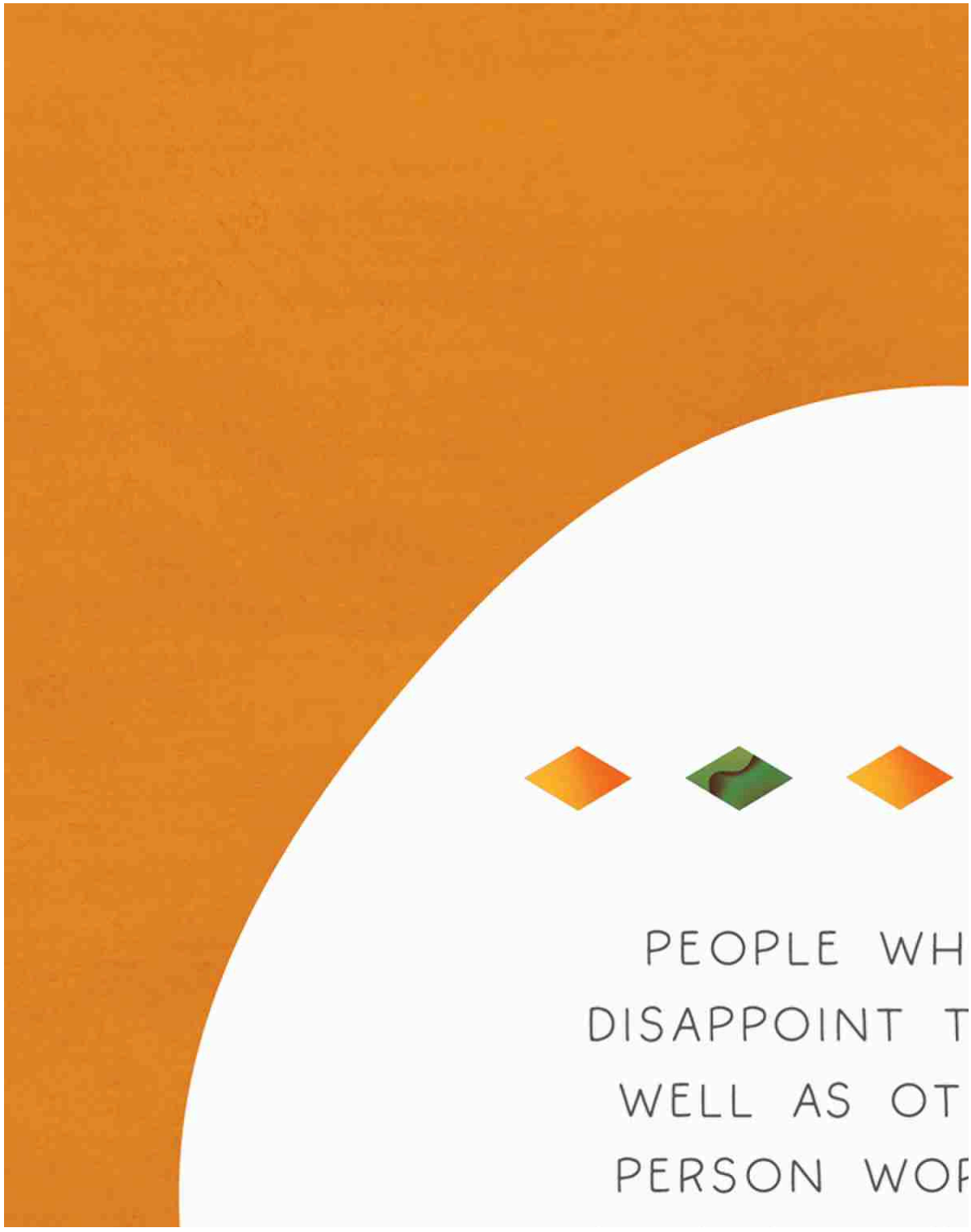
Just then Gabriel appeared. “Son, what’s wrong with your eye?” asked his concerned mother.

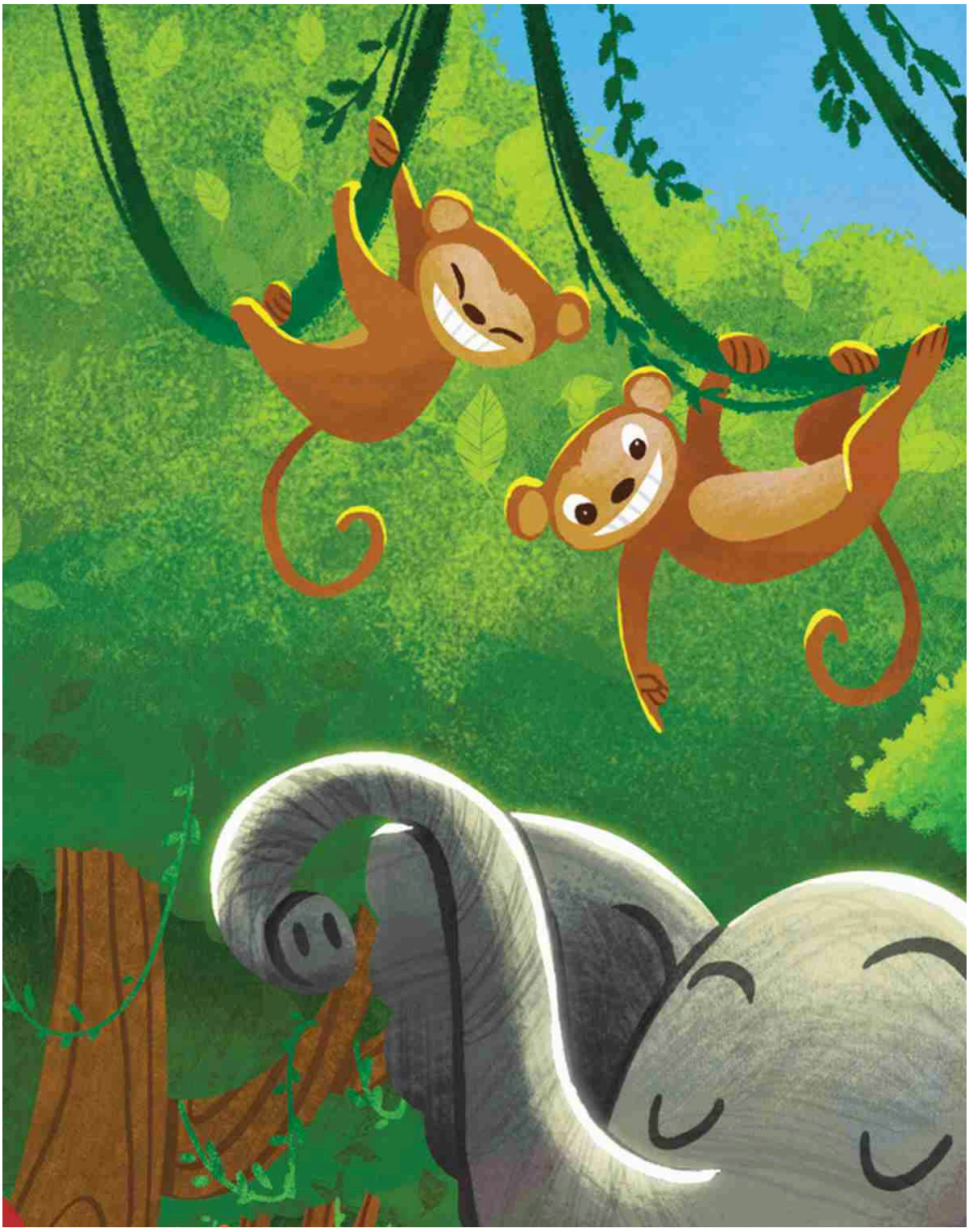
“And why is this firewood so wet?” growled his father.

The boy gulped and shuffled his feet. He felt ashamed that he had let them down by being so lazy the day before. Trying not to cry, he explained how he had fallen asleep under the tree and gathered the wrong wood, hurting his eye in the process. “I’m so sorry I didn’t go to the forest like you asked. I was feeling too tired, so I tried to take an easy way out,” he said.

“Well, by the time we gather dry wood to cook breakfast,” replied his father, “it’ll be much too late to go and see the whales – it’s too far.”

Gabriel was disappointed, but determined to make amends. Later that day he went to the forest to collect lots of good firewood, so the next morning his mother was able to cook them all a filling breakfast. And as a reward for his hard work, they went to see the whales after all – a magical experience that Gabriel never forgot.


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THE INVISIBLE ELEPHANT

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about an elephant who thought he was invisible. Do you think he was *really* invisible? Let's read the story and find out.

Eric the elephant was standing at the edge of the jungle when he saw a shooting star. "I'll make a wish," he said.

"If I were you, I'd wish to be invisible," said Tommy the tiger, who was camouflaged in the tall grass. "You're so big. Hunters can easily see you and catch you."

"What a wonderful idea," said Eric, and he wished: "Oh, shooting star, if you can hear, make me vanish and disappear." But he could still see his trunk when he looked down. "My wish hasn't come true," he sighed.

Just then, Tommy decided to play a trick. "Where are you? I can hear your voice, but I can't see you!" he cried.

“Really?” Eric chuckled. “I must be invisible after all!” And the next morning he stomped through the jungle, imagining himself as transparent as the air.

“Hello. Can you see me?” he asked everyone he met. Tommy had warned them all not to spoil his trick, so even though the monkeys could see Eric, they chuckled and said, “We can’t see you. You’re invisible.” Then they swung away through the trees, laughing at how silly Eric had been.

Eric, though, was delighted with his magic disguise. “Can you see me?” he asked the parrots.

“See *who*?” they squawked. “There’s nobody there!” Then they flew away, shrieking with laughter.

“Amazing! I’ll be safe from any hunters,” said Eric. Then he saw a little mouse. “Hello, down there. Can you see me?” Elsa the mouse scurried away – she knew Tommy would be furious if she spoilt his trick, but she didn’t want to lie to Eric. Later that day, as she was nibbling a berry, Elsa spotted elephant hunters coming through the jungle, carrying a big net. “Quick!” she called to a passing parrot. “Fly fast! Warn Eric he’s not invisible!”

“No way!” said the parrot. “I’m scared of Tommy.”

“Swing quickly to Eric,” she begged a monkey, but the monkey cried, “I can’t do that, Tommy will be angry!”

“But the hunters will catch Eric!” Elsa squeaked as she ran through the undergrowth. Then she saw the big elephant standing in a clearing, the jungle creatures still chuckling in the branches above. “Run, Eric! Hunters are coming!” she cried.

Eric smiled. “I’m safe! I’m invisible. Everyone says so.”

Elsa scurried along his trunk and pulled up his enormous ear. “You’re not invisible!” she said. “Tommy the tiger played a trick. Now run, before the hunters throw their net.” Eric was confused, but

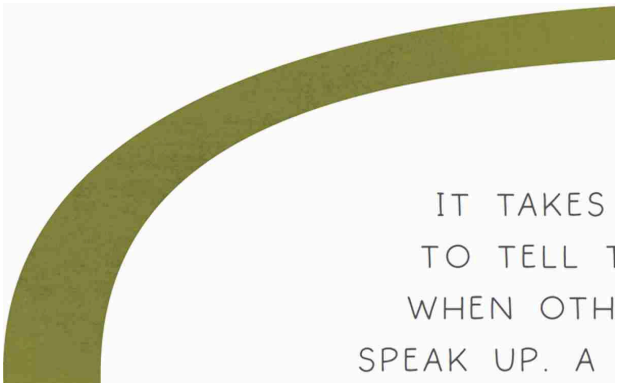
hearing the panic in the little mouse's voice, he turned quickly and thundered away.

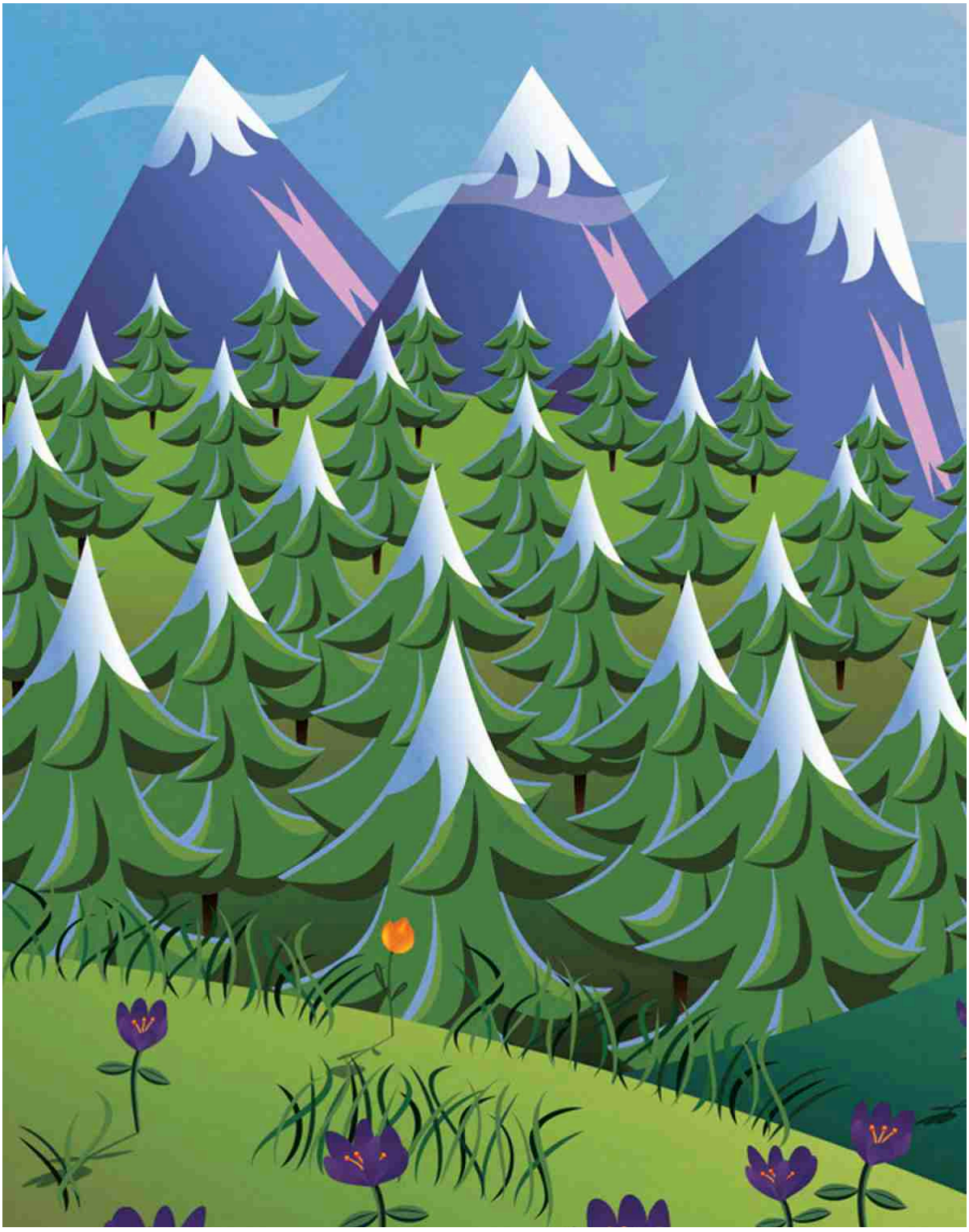
That night Elsa lay relaxing on Eric's shoulder, staring at the starry sky. "Thank you, little friend," Eric said to Elsa. "I was silly to believe I was actually invisible. And foolish to trust Tommy. If you hadn't been brave enough to tell the truth, the hunters would have caught me."

"It's Tommy who needs to be brave now!" said Elsa, spotting the tiger's shadow in the long grass. "He should be brave enough to come out and apologize."

"Quite right!" chorused the parrots and the monkeys from their resting places in the treetops.

"All right! All right! I'm sorry!" mumbled Tommy. And he slunk off, wishing that *he* could disappear ...









THE NAUGHTY LITTLE RABBIT

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a little rabbit who didn't like going to school until, one day, he learned a very important lesson. What do you think it was? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... in a magical meadow at the foot of a snow-capped mountain lived some lovely furry rabbits. Their leader was so old that his coat had turned silvery grey, and everyone called him Old Silver. He was loved and respected by everyone.

One misty autumn morning as he gazed out of his burrow onto the meadow, he was approached by some eager young rabbits who asked him if he would be kind enough to pass on some of his wisdom. Old Silver twitched his nose. "Why not?" he said. "We'll start tomorrow. Be here at one o'clock sharp and I'll teach you all I know – especially how to avoid being trapped. There's nothing more important than that. Don't be late!"

So the next day, at one o'clock on the dot, the rabbits began their classes. All, that is, except one naughty little rabbit called Pip, who didn't think that learning anything could be worth giving up his time playing. He just wanted to have fun. So, day after day, Pip went down to the pond to play with the ducks. He jumped as high as he could to win the attention of passing butterflies. And he went into the woods to hop through the autumn leaves and make tunes from their crunching sounds underfoot.

But one day, when he was busy playing and dancing, he skipped onto a net laid on the ground, which was cunningly covered with twigs and leaves – it was a trap! The net tightened around him, scooping him up into a ball. "Help! I've been caught!" he wailed.

That evening, when Pip didn't return home, his worried mother asked Old Silver to organize a search. He sent the rabbits out to look in the places where Pip usually played, while he himself headed for the places where he knew hunters often laid traps.

He hadn't been searching long when he heard human footsteps. A man was coming – it sounded like a hunter! Alarmed, Old Silver raced on to the next trap and there he found sad little Pip wrapped up in the hunter's net. Quickly, the wise old rabbit used his long, sharp teeth to gnaw through the ropes. Just as the footsteps were almost on top of them, Silver bit through the last strand and Pip was free! They scampered away as fast as their little legs could carry them.

Pip's mother wept with joy when she saw her son unharmed. "I'm so glad you're safe!" she cried. "You gave me such a fright!"

"I'm sorry, Mother," said Pip, clinging to her.

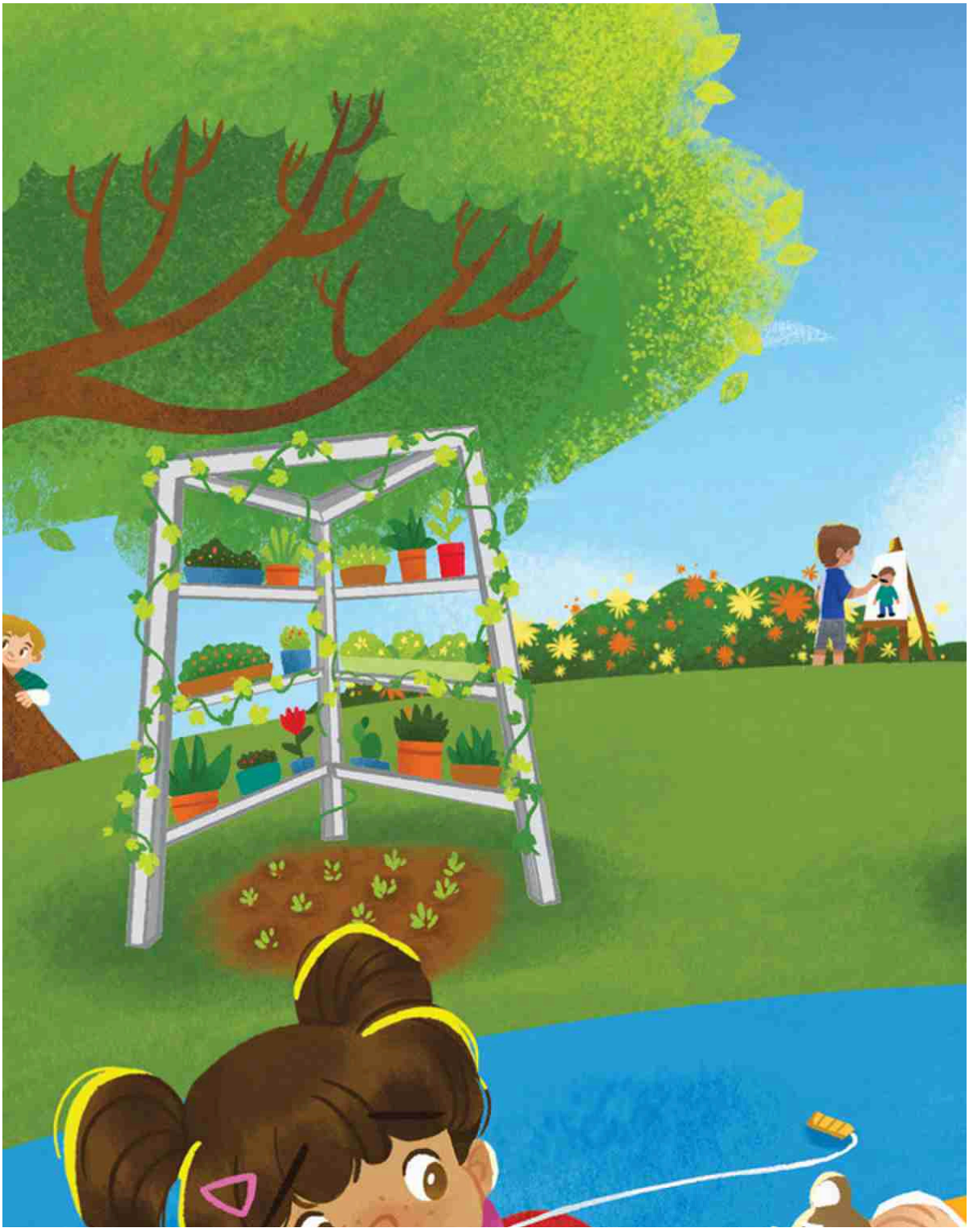
"It's all right, son," she replied. "But now do you see why it's so important to create time to listen and learn from others? There are some things in life that you really need to learn."

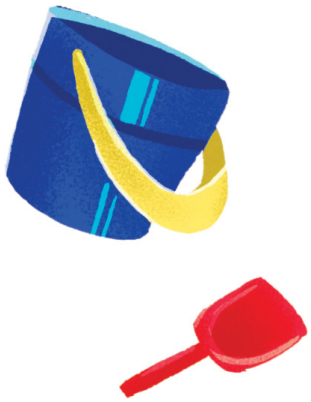
“Yes, Mother, I realize that now,” replied Pip. “I’m so sorry, Old Silver! I promise never to skip lessons again.”





WE CAN ALL
LISTENING TC
THAT OTHERS
FROM EXPERIE





THE TEDDY BEAR TUSSLE

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a girl called Polly who loved her teddy bear Bruno. What do you think happened to Bruno? Let's read the story and find out.

Polly had been given Bruno when she was a baby. Everywhere Polly went, the teddy bear went too – except, that is, to school. "Bringing toys to school is not allowed," said Polly's teacher, Mrs Robinson. But at times Polly couldn't bear to be parted from Bruno. One day, she crammed him into the pocket of her hoody, before setting off for school. Bruno stayed hidden all through morning lessons. But at lunchtime, as Polly walked across the playground, a boy called Luke noticed Bruno's furry ear.

"What's that?" he shouted. Before Polly could answer, he yanked Bruno out of his hiding place.

"Ha!" he roared. "I've got your ted!"

“Be careful!” Polly cried, as Luke ran round the playground, swinging poor Bruno by his ear. “Stop!” begged Polly. But Luke wouldn’t listen. He wanted to keep the smartly dressed bear for himself.

Luke ran round the playground quicker than ever, but Polly was even faster. “Got you!” she yelled, grabbing Bruno by the leg. “Now let him go.”

“I won’t!” said Luke, tugging at Bruno’s arm. “He’s mine now!” he goaded.

“No!” gasped Polly. “Give him back!” But Luke only pulled harder. Polly tugged too. “Let go!” she screamed.

“No!” roared Luke.

They yanked and pulled, stretching poor Bruno between them. Then suddenly Polly heard a horrible tearing sound. Bruno’s arm was coming away from his body! Luke kept pulling, but Polly let go. She loved the teddy far too much to allow him to be torn in two.

“All right!” she cried. “You have him, then!” And she burst into tears.

Luke ran off, whooping for joy. “I’ve got your teddy! I’ve got your ted!” he sang unkindly.

Hearing the commotion, Mrs Robinson came outside. “What’s going on?” she asked. Polly wanted to explain that Luke had taken her beloved teddy but she didn’t dare say anything. She knew toys weren’t allowed at school.

“What’s the matter, dear?” said Mrs Robinson gently. “Don’t cry. Tell me what happened.”

“I brought my teddy to school,” sobbed Polly to her teacher. “I’m sorry.” Luke stopped running and stared guiltily at Bruno’s torn arm.

Mrs Robinson took the little bear from him and examined the damage to his arm as Polly told her how she and Luke had fought

over Bruno.

“You were very brave, Polly. Letting go of something you love so much must have been a hard thing to do,” she said. “And it’s a good job you did let go – otherwise his arm would have come off altogether. As it is, with a few careful stitches, I think he’ll be as good as new.”



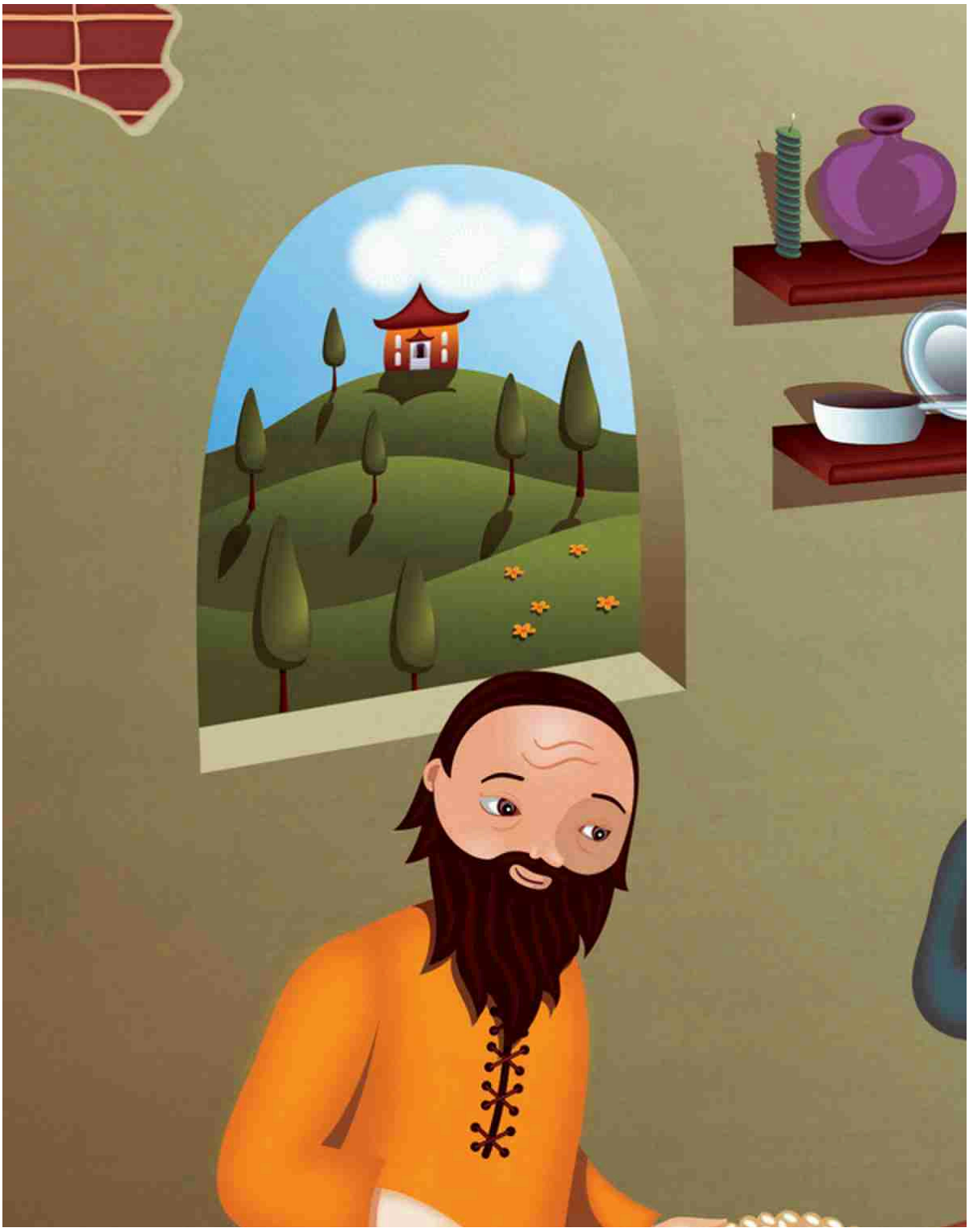


“Thank goodness!” cried Polly, gently taking Bruno from her teacher and giving him a big hug.

“Take him home to be mended tonight and don’t bring him back to school again,” said Mrs Robinson firmly.

Mrs Robinson turned to Luke, who was staring at his shoes. “As for you, young man, you know very well it is wrong to take things that belong to other people ...” But Polly didn’t hear any more. She was busy tucking Bruno away – very safely – until hometime.


SOMETIMES
BE BRAVE AN
SOMETHING –





THE SMALL BOWL OF RICE

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a miser who lived in a big mansion at the top of a lonely hill. One day something happened that was to change his life for ever. Do you want to know what it was? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... the miser's mansion was very old, big and draughty. He lived there alone, apart from a few servants, and a dog whom he hadn't even bothered to name. The miser slept and ate in one of the mansion's many towers and spent his days counting and recounting his gold. He loved gold more than anything in the world – he never shared or even spent it. And he was renowned for being the meanest man there ever was. He was so mean that he had never invited anyone to his house, nor ever given anyone a present. In fact, he only went out once a year for fear of spending money. And on this day, he would travel in a grand carriage, with his dog and a servant, to collect taxes from the poor peasants who farmed his lands.

One year, he was returning home after a very successful day collecting taxes. Night was falling and, as he hugged his large sack of gold, his carriage was suddenly stopped by robbers. “Help!” he shouted, but it was no use. The robbers stripped the miser of his clothes, made him put on rags and took him and his dog far out into the countryside, where they left them with no food or water.

The miser was very shaken up by this turn of events and shouted at the little dog for not attacking the robbers. It was getting dark and they were completely lost. Despairing, he crawled under a hedge and cried himself to sleep, thinking of his stolen gold. The little dog curled up in a ball nearby.

The next day, he woke up feeling cold, sore and hungry. He set off with the dog in search of a village, walking and walking, until eventually they came to a road, although they still saw no one. After walking all day without food, the miser felt desperately hungry and sorry for himself. Then, all of a sudden, his dog barked and ran off.

The miser followed him, only to find a lone little cottage surrounded by wild rose bushes. He saw white smoke rising from its chimney. Encouraged, he knocked on the door. But suddenly he hesitated, remembering with shame how he had always sent away anyone who had knocked on his own door for help. Why should anyone want to help a man dressed in rags, such as himself? He was just about to leave when a cheerful voice called, “Who’s there?”

Relieved, the miser replied humbly, “I’m sorry to disturb you, but I’m lost and hungry. Could you please spare my dog and I some food? And would there be any chance of letting us sleep somewhere warm?” asked the miser.

“Of course,” replied the friendly voice. “Come in.”



So the miser went in, and the dog followed. The room was quite bare – there were only a few pieces of old furniture and no curtains on the windows. But there was a small fire in the hearth. Sitting at a table was a kind-looking man, and by his side a brown dog wagged his tail and grinned. The man got up from the table and laughed heartily. “It’s a poor lost soul, Archie,” he told his dog, “and he’s brought you a new friend!”

“Come in and sit down,” he said, turning to the miser. “Welcome to my feast. Tonight we have a banquet of delicious rice!” he joked. The man went to a shelf and took down two small bowls. “We’ll have to share this rice – it’s all I have, I’m afraid,” he added. “And your dog can share Archie’s.” Saying this, he put some rice in Archie’s large bowl for the two dogs and divided the rest between the two small bowls for himself and the miser, who couldn’t believe the man’s generosity. How could he be so poor and yet so happy? The miser thought of his gold, his servants and his mansion. But despite all these possessions, he had never been as happy as this man who had so little. He was filled with guilt and shame for his miserly behaviour over the years.

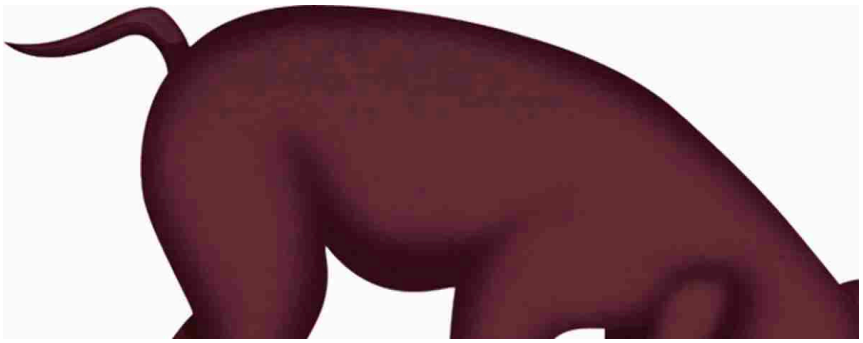
Soon, his hunger brought him back to the present and he tucked into the rice. He ate it greedily, thinking how nothing had ever tasted so delicious! Soon the miser was infected by the warmth of the kind man’s heart and found himself confiding in him about how he had

been robbed. The man listened intently, and when the miser had finished, he said, “Your story makes me sad. You have so much yet your life is so lonely and empty.” Then, he gave the miser his sleeping spot in front of the fire, said goodnight and lay down on the floor to get a good night’s sleep.

The miser was so moved by this kindness, and so grateful for it, that, as he lay awake in front of the fire thinking about what had happened, his mean heart began to melt. Tears streamed down his cheeks, for now he saw how terrible his life really was. He reached out to his dog and patted him for the first time ever. And he resolved to repay the man’s generosity a thousand fold.

The next morning, when he awoke, he invited the poor man and his dog to come and live with him in his mansion – an offer which they gladly accepted. Without delay they all set off for the miser’s home.

And so it was that from that day forward the miser changed his ways. He and the poor man became the best of friends, living happily together with Archie and Merry – as he named his dog – who flourished with the newfound attention. No one was ever again turned away empty-handed from the mansion on the hill. And instead of collecting taxes, the miser used his gold to improve the lives of local people. Twice a year, he even held feasts for his neighbours and parties for the children, which were so enjoyable that they became the talk of the land.





GREED AND
SPOIL THINGS
A WISE PERSON
THE WAY TO TR





THE SINGING CANARY

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a happy sparrow called Mack who, one day, became very envious and unhappy. What do you think happened to make him feel like that? Let's read the story and find out.

It was a warm spring morning. Tired from swooping through the sky, Mack flapped his feathers and settled to rest on the branch of a tree. He could see for miles over the sunlit fields. What a wonderful view!

Mack opened his beak and sang. "Oh, what a beautiful morning!" His chirp crackled in the still air. "Oh, what a beautiful day!"

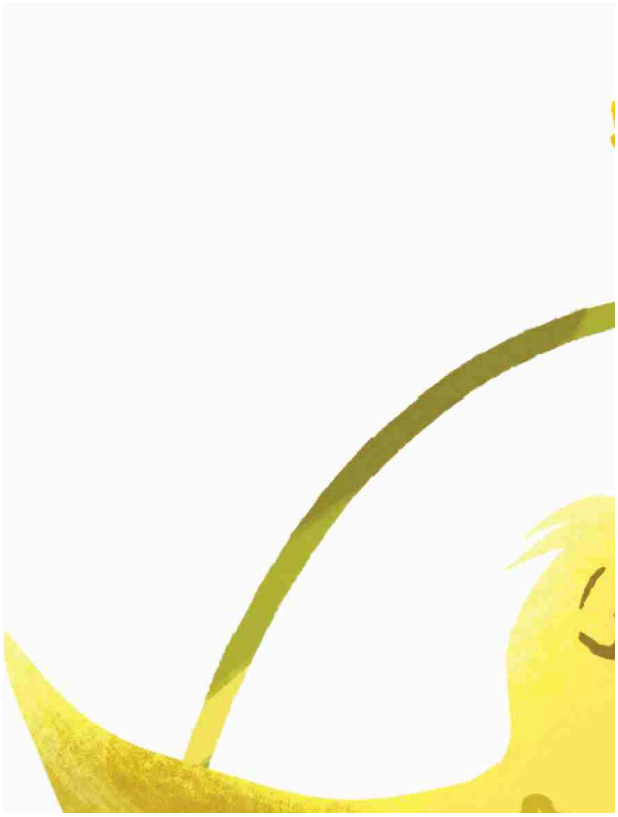
Then suddenly he heard another voice – a birdsong so sweet it made his feathers tremble: "Oh, what a beautiful morning ..." The tune was the same, but it sounded so pure, so fresh, so much finer than his own sharp voice.

Behind a hedge was a little, white farmhouse. "That must be where the singing is coming from," he chirped. He fluttered over to land on the windowsill. And then he froze. He had expected to see another dusty sparrow like him, or maybe a slate-grey starling. Perhaps even a robin with a fine red breast. But the bird Mack saw

was far more handsome than that. He had wonderful yellow feathers as bright as the sun.

“Who are you? *What* are you?” Mack gasped. The little yellow bird stopped singing and turned his head.

“I’m a canary,” said the bird, and his sweet voice rippled with warm laughter. “My name is Apollo.”



“Apollo? Ha! What a silly name.” Mack was surprised by his own harsh words, but he didn’t take them back. He wanted to tease the bird with the fancy name, fine feathers and beautiful voice. “I heard you showing off with your singing,” he snapped. “You interrupted my song.”

“I didn’t mean to show off,” said Apollo. “I’m sorry. The sunlight on the garden looked so lovely that it made me want to sing ...” Apollo

trailed off and looked so sad that Mack felt ashamed.

“It’s not fair,” Mack sighed. “I’ve always liked my brown feathers, but looking at you, I realize how scruffy I am. And I love to sing, but compared to yours, my song is as tuneless as a frog’s croak.” He shuffled awkwardly on the sill. “I’m jealous,” he admitted.

“*You*? Jealous of *me*?” Apollo shook his head. “Don’t be jealous of me, my friend. My feathers and my voice are nothing. Rather, I should be jealous of you!”

Mack gave a rattly chirp of disbelief and looked at his brown wings. “What do I have that you could ever want?”

“You have the greatest gift of all,” said Apollo. “You have freedom.” The canary spread his golden wings and lifted from his perch – but he flapped only twice and then fell back. Something was holding him back.

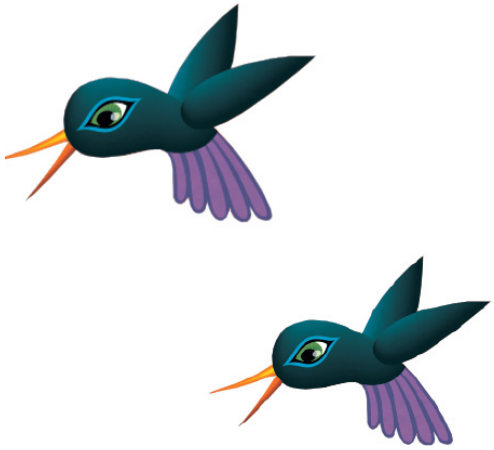
“Oh my! You’re tied down,” gasped Mack, noticing a thin silver chain fastened around Apollo’s leg. The other end was attached securely to the perch.

“I can never fly away,” Apollo said. “I will never feel the breeze on my feathers. I will never sing in the blue sky.”

“That’s terrible!” said Mack. He was only an ordinary sparrow, but he was as free as the wind. “I’m sorry,” he said. “Let’s be friends. When I visit, we can sing together.” Apollo agreed, and they began to sing their song: “Oh, what a beautiful morning ...”


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THE SUFFERIN
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THE PRANCING PEACOCK

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a handsome but vain peacock. He lived high up in rocky, mountainous country where the white fluffy clouds played in the blue sky over the kingdom of the birds. One afternoon, as the peacock was admiring his reflection in a rock pool, he overheard something very interesting in the chatter of a family of robins. What could it be? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... on this particular day, Mrs Robin could scarcely contain her excitement. "What a great occasion!" she twittered to her husband as she hopped about.

"Indeed, indeed," agreed Mr Robin.

"Why? What's happening today?" chirped Little Robin with great curiosity.

"Well, my darling," she exclaimed, "today, our king, His Majesty White Swan the Great, is to give the hand of his beautiful daughter,

Princess Cygnetta, in marriage."

"Who's she going to marry?" asked Little Robin.

"Well, that's the thing. We don't know yet," said Mr Robin.

"You see," continued Mrs Robin, "many years ago, the king granted Princess Cygnetta a special birthday wish, and she asked to be able to pick her own husband when she was ready to marry. So the king has called all the eligible birds from near and far to meet this evening below the rocky plateau. Today is the day when she will make her choice. Let's hurry – if we arrive early we'll get a good view." So away the three of them flew.

All this time the vain peacock had been listening to the robins' conversation. "Well, well," he muttered to himself, as he turned again to gaze admiringly at his reflection in the rock pool. "Princess Cygnetta is choosing a husband, is she? This might be her lucky day. After all, I'm young, handsome and single – I'm really quite a catch! And it just so happens," he continued to his reflection, "that I'm free this evening. I think I might take a stroll toward the rocky plateau." The peacock turned to go but then stopped to check his appearance one last time. Extremely pleased with his reflection in the pool, he pranced off.

Below the rocky plateau, birds were flying in from all directions, chirping and squawking excitedly as they did so. A large and feathery crowd soon gathered, full of long-legged flamingoes, rainbow-coloured parrots, exotic birds of paradise, wise, dignified owls, shimmering hummingbirds and many more.



Suddenly, King White Swan and Princess Cygnetta appeared on the ledge, and the princess started to look around at the grand gathering of birds. A ripple of excitement went through the crowd as her gaze swept over them, and the young male birds jostled for space to show themselves off. The proud peacock jumped up onto a small rock and opened his beautiful tail feathers, which glistened and shone in the evening light.

Then, the king raised his regal head and opened his great wings. A hush fell over all the birds. “Daughter, my finest subjects stand gathered before us. Are you now ready to choose your husband?” he asked.



The young princess nodded. She had seen the most dazzling bird below and had fallen in love. “That bird over there, father, on that rock. I wish to marry the peacock.”

The other young male birds in the crowd sighed with disappointment at first. But they soon cheered the peacock on his good fortune. He puffed out his chest with pride. “Of course,” he said smugly, “I knew I’d be chosen! After all, I *am* the most handsome bird of all.”

Hearing his boastful words, the other birds began whispering to one another. “What a shame he’s so vain. Poor Princess Cygnetta!”

But the peacock was soaking up all the attention and ignored their comments. He fanned out his beautiful tail feathers and bowed to the crowd. Then, he lifted his head up high to show off his strong blue chest. The more everyone admired him, the more he leaned back until – oh dear! – he leaned back so far that he lost his balance and fell clumsily backward. The peacock landed on his back with a big thump, and an equally loud “Ouchhhh!” How embarassing!

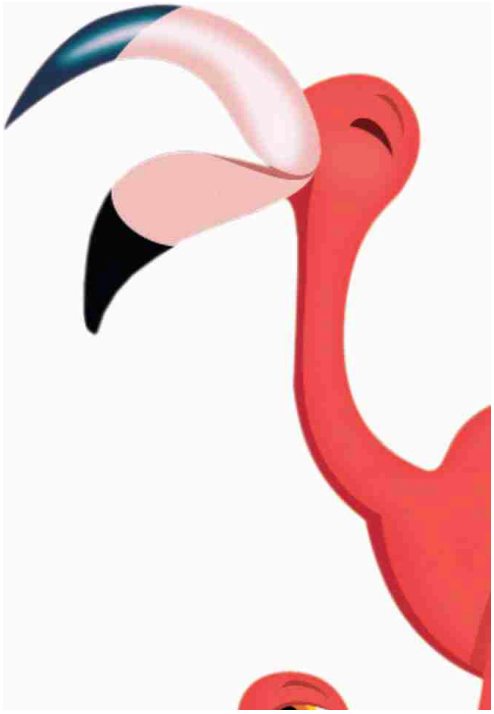
For a moment there was stunned silence, but once the birds saw that he hadn’t hurt himself, everyone burst out laughing. What a sorry sight! The peacock’s legs were stuck up in the air and his gorgeous tail feathers were all covered in mud. His head spun for a minute, but he quickly pulled himself together, puffing up his chest and fanning out his muddy tail. But when he heard the birds laughing, he shouted, “How *dare* you laugh at me, you commoners! I demand that you show respect to Prince Peacock.”

When King White Swan saw the peacock’s antics and heard his proud words, he was very angry to see his daughter’s chosen husband act so inappropriately.

“Peacock, you are a vain and silly fool,” he proclaimed. “Your behaviour today shows that you are not worthy to be my daughter’s

husband or to become a prince. I will not permit it.”

Having been scolded in public, the peacock realized he’d lost his beautiful bride for good and hung his head in shame. And Cygnetta saw she’d had a lucky escape, and asked her father to help her to choose a new husband. While the other birds waited excitedly to see who would be the new choice, the disgraced peacock slunk away, muttering that he’d never be so vain and silly again.





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THE PRINCESS AND THE PRECIOUS PEARLS

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a princess called Aster, who lost something very special. What do you think happened? Let's read the story and find out.

One hot afternoon, Princess Aster put on her swimsuit and hurried across the palace gardens toward the cool bathing pools beneath the shady trees. Overhead, the palace monkeys dozed quietly in the branches.

"Good to see you're behaving yourselves," Princess Aster called out, remembering how just last week the monkeys had played frisbee with her mother's crown. At the edge of a large pool, she kicked off her sandals and was about to leap in when she remembered that she was wearing her string of precious rose-coloured pearls.

“Argh!” she said. “I should have left the necklace in my bedroom.” The priceless pearls had belonged Princess Aster’s great-great-grandmother. She did not dare wear them while she was swimming.

Princess Aster knew she should run back to the palace and put the pearls safely in her jewellery box, but it was so hot. “It will take too long!” she said. She glanced across the long lawns and saw Oliver, the baker’s boy from the village, huffing and puffing with a huge hamper of bread and cakes for the palace. She gave him a friendly wave. “It’s nearly time for tea,” Aster sighed. “If I go back now there won’t be time to swim!” She hid the pearls under her towel at the foot of a tree. “The necklace will be safe there,” she told herself. Then she dived into the cool water with a splash. “Yippee!”

Unknown to Aster, not all the monkeys were asleep. Peeping down through the branches, a golden-coloured monkey called Moss had seen her take off the shiny pearls, then dive into the water. “Oooh! I do love things that sparkle,” she cooed. Quick as a flash, she leapt down, grabbed the necklace, then swung away through the branches before anyone could see what she had done – least of all Princess Aster, who was still happily splashing.

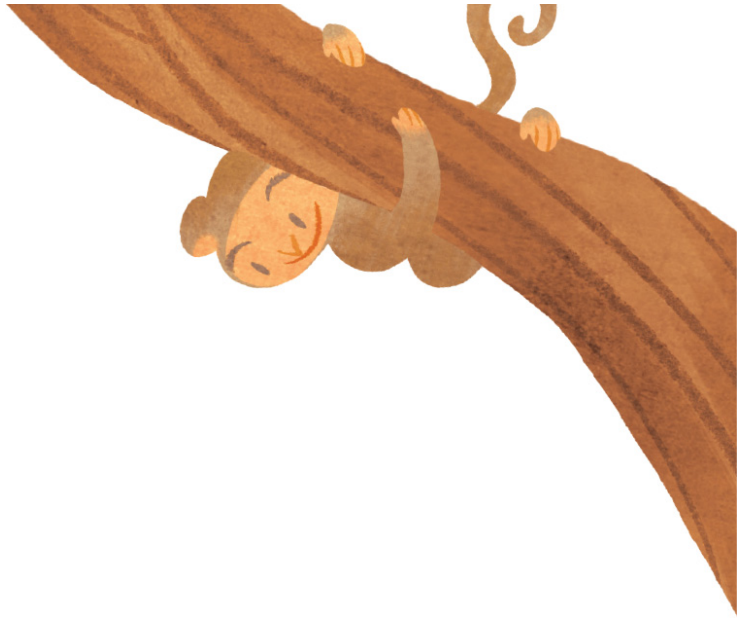
Ten minutes later, Aster’s tutor called her in for tea. Aster climbed out of the pool, picked up her towel – and froze in horror. “Help!” she wailed. “My pearls are gone!”

The palace guards ran from all corners of the garden, crashing through the trees. “Who has stolen the pearls?” they cried. “Someone must have seen who took them!”

Then they spied Oliver returning down the drive, having made his delivery, the now-empty hamper on his back. “Stop!” cried the guards, charging after Oliver. He took fright at their angry voices and, without thinking, dropped the hamper, turned on his heels and ran. The monkeys squawked in the trees.

“Quick! The boy is running away!” panted the Captain of the Guards, charging after him. “It must be him!”

Oliver tried to scramble over the palace gates, but he was too slow. “Got you!” said the captain, grabbing the poor boy by the ankle and pulling him to the ground.



“I haven’t done anything wrong!” cried Oliver.

“Fibber!” barked the captain. “You are the only stranger inside the palace grounds. It *must* have been you who stole the necklace.”

The guards searched Oliver and the hamper but found nothing. “Where have you hidden it?” demanded the captain, furiously. He marched Oliver off to see the King.

Oliver sunk down to his knees before the throne. “It wasn’t me who took the necklace, Your Majesty,” he tried to explain. But the king was too angry to listen.

“If you are not the thief, why did you try to run away?” he bellowed. Without waiting for an answer, he ordered Oliver to be locked up until

he told them what he had done with the necklace. “Please believe me!” begged Oliver as he was led away. “I’m innocent.”

“Oh, this is not right,” said Princess Aster to her tutor when she heard what had happened. “Oliver and I are friends – we often talk when he drops off a delivery. I know he wouldn’t take my necklace.”

“Well, I agree with His Majesty. If the boy didn’t take it, why did he try to run away?” her tutor asked.

“I don’t know,” said Princess Aster. It was true, running away did make Oliver look guilty, but they had waved to each other before her swim – why would he take her pearls? She tried to think calmly.

“I expect Oliver was scared because the guards were chasing him,” she said at last. “I would have run away too. Even the monkeys were frightened.” She glanced out of the window and saw the monkeys in the trees by the pool – no longer sleeping, but chattering loudly to one another.

“Of course!” she gasped. “The mischievous monkeys! I bet it was one of them!” Aster dashed upstairs to her bedroom and grabbed a toy tiara and a handful of sparkly sequins from her dressing-up box. She marched back down the stairs. “Follow me,” she said to the grown-ups. “I think I know who the real thief is!”

Aster ran to the edge of the pool, laid the toy jewels at the foot of the tree and then crept away to hide. “Shh!” she said, putting her finger to her lips. The king, the guards and her tutor hid, too. It was only a moment before naughty little Moss the monkey appeared.

“Oooh, look!” she chattered to herself. “More sparkly jewels.” She swung down from the trees, a string of pretty pearls dangling round her neck.

“Stop! Thief!” The captain grabbed the cheeky monkey by the tail.

“Careful!” cried Princess Aster. “She’s only a playful little monkey. She didn’t know how precious the jewels were.” She gently

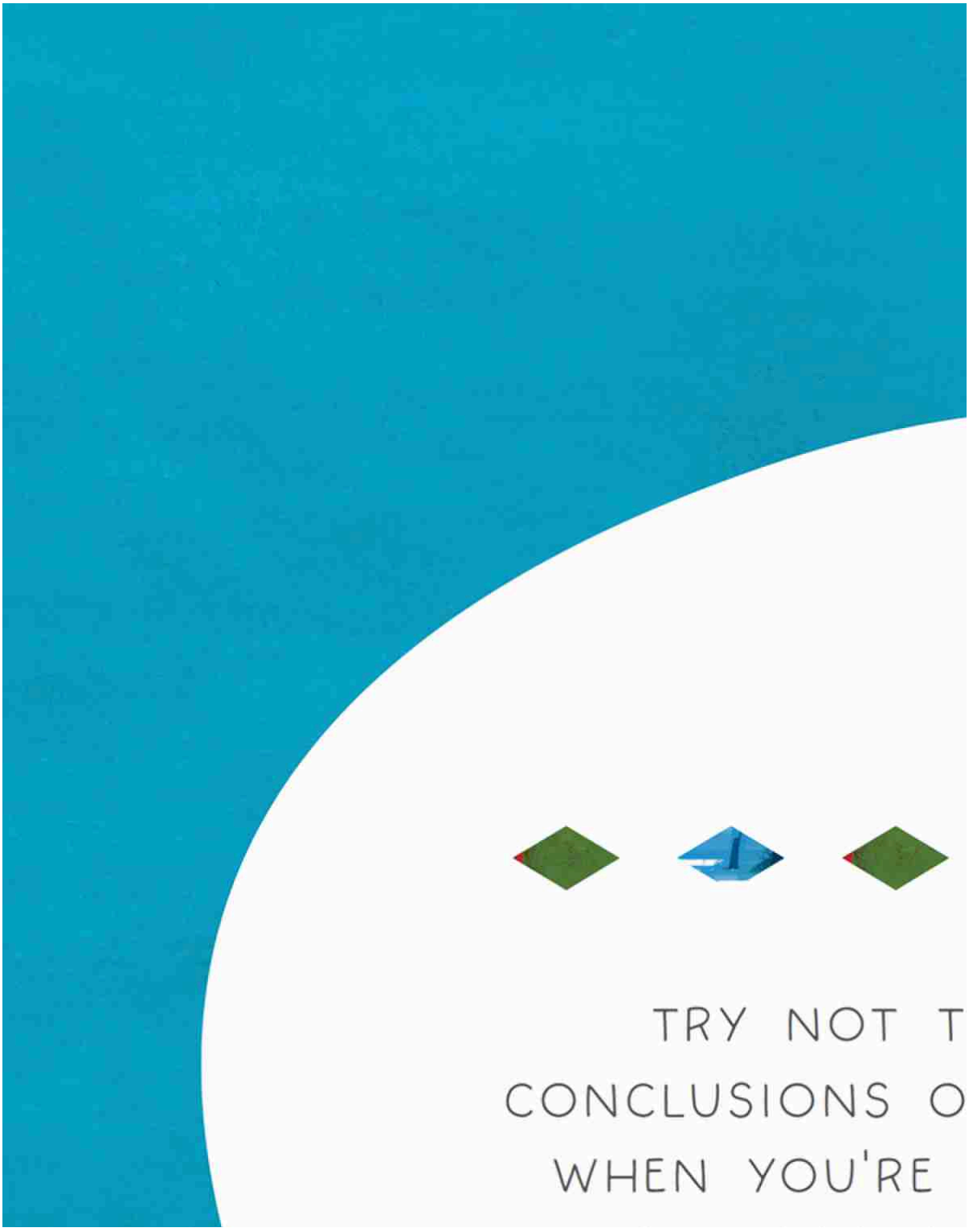
unclipped the necklace from Moss's neck. "I'm afraid you can't keep my pearls," Princess Aster explained. "But you can have my toy tiara, if you like."

"Oooh!" The little monkey swung away, delighted with her shiny prize. And Princess Aster fastened the precious necklace safely around her own neck. "We owe Oliver an apology," she said.

"I am proud of you, Aster," said the king. "I should have stopped to think before jumping to the wrong conclusion."

"And I should have been more careful with my jewels!" said Princess Aster. "We have all learned a lesson today."




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THE DIRTY OLD GOBLET

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about two rival salesmen who wandered from town to town with their carts, trading and selling all sorts of useful and useless things. One man was mean and sly but the other was kind and honest. Do you want to know what happened to them? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... on this particular day the salesmen were both heading to the same small town to sell their goods. "Morning, Mr Johnson," said kind Mr Wallace politely.

“Where do you think *you’re* going?” asked mean Mr Johnson suspiciously.

“I’m going to Little Fulbrook to sell my wares,” answered Mr Wallace.

“But, *I’m* selling there,” said Mr Johnson. “And I don’t want you stealing my business!”

“I understand, and that’s fine. Why don’t we come to an arrangement to suit us both?” said Mr Wallace.

“Oh, all right, then,” agreed Mr Johnson sulkily. “So while I sell my goods in the north side of town ...”

“... I’ll sell mine in the south side so that we’re not competing against one another,” Mr Wallace chipped in.



“Then, we’ll swap over,” they both said together.

So it was decided, and the two salesman went off in opposite directions to different parts of town.

Mean Mr Johnson stopped at the first house in the north of the town. He rapped on the door, which was opened by a kindly old lady and a smiling little girl called Ella. Seeing the child, the salesman quickly pulled out several sparkly, plastic bracelets from his pocket and shook them in the light to make them razzle-dazzle. “Would you

like to buy a beautiful bracelet for yourself, lovely lady, or perhaps for the sweet little girl?" he said in his best flattering voice.

Ella gasped, "Please, Grandmother, please can I have the pink one? It's so pretty!"

The old woman stroked the child's hair, saying, "My darling, you know I would buy it for you if I could. But I'm sorry, we need all our money for food." Turning to the man, she said, "Sorry, sir, we are poor. We can't afford to buy such luxuries."

"But maybe we could do a swap?" asked Ella. She ran back inside and returned with a dirty, old goblet she had found one day while out playing.

"Please, sir, will you swap the lovely bracelet for this old goblet?" she pleaded.

Mr Johnson picked up the goblet. Noticing it felt heavy, he looked at it closely and scratched the dirt off with his nail. He could see a glint of metal underneath – the goblet was made of gold!

Hiding both his excitement and his greed, he handed it back to the little girl, saying scornfully, "This old goblet is worthless. Nobody would buy it, so I'm afraid you can't have the bracelet."

"Ohhhh ..." sighed Ella sadly, as she ran to her grandmother for a comforting hug.

The mean salesman went on his way, thinking to himself, "I'll return later to say I've changed my mind about the exchange. That way they'll think they've got a great deal! It's so lucky they don't realize what they have – I'll be rich!" And he chuckled to himself, as he thought about how he'd spend all the money that he'd be able to get when he sold the golden goblet.

Meanwhile, kind Mr Wallace had finished selling in the south side of town and now turned to the north. He came to the same house and knocked on the door.

“Good lady and pretty little girl ...” he began cheerily when they answered the door.

“I’m sorry, sir,” interrupted the lady, “we are poor and can’t afford anything. Thank you anyway.”



“But, Grandmother, perhaps *this* kind man will trade something for the goblet?” cried Ella, and she ran off to fetch it again. The old woman whispered to the salesman, “Sir, my granddaughter’s goblet is worthless – we were told this only today – so please don’t get her hopes up. It would be best if you left before she returns.” But the kind salesman felt sorry for her and decided to give her a small gift anyway.

Ella returned and handed him her goblet. Now, this salesman was honest as well as kind. And as soon as he held the goblet and saw the scratch, he exclaimed,“Goodness! What a lucky girl you are! This goblet is solid gold. It’s worth more than all the goods on my barrow put together. I’ll give you my whole barrow-load and all the money I’ve earned today in exchange for it.”

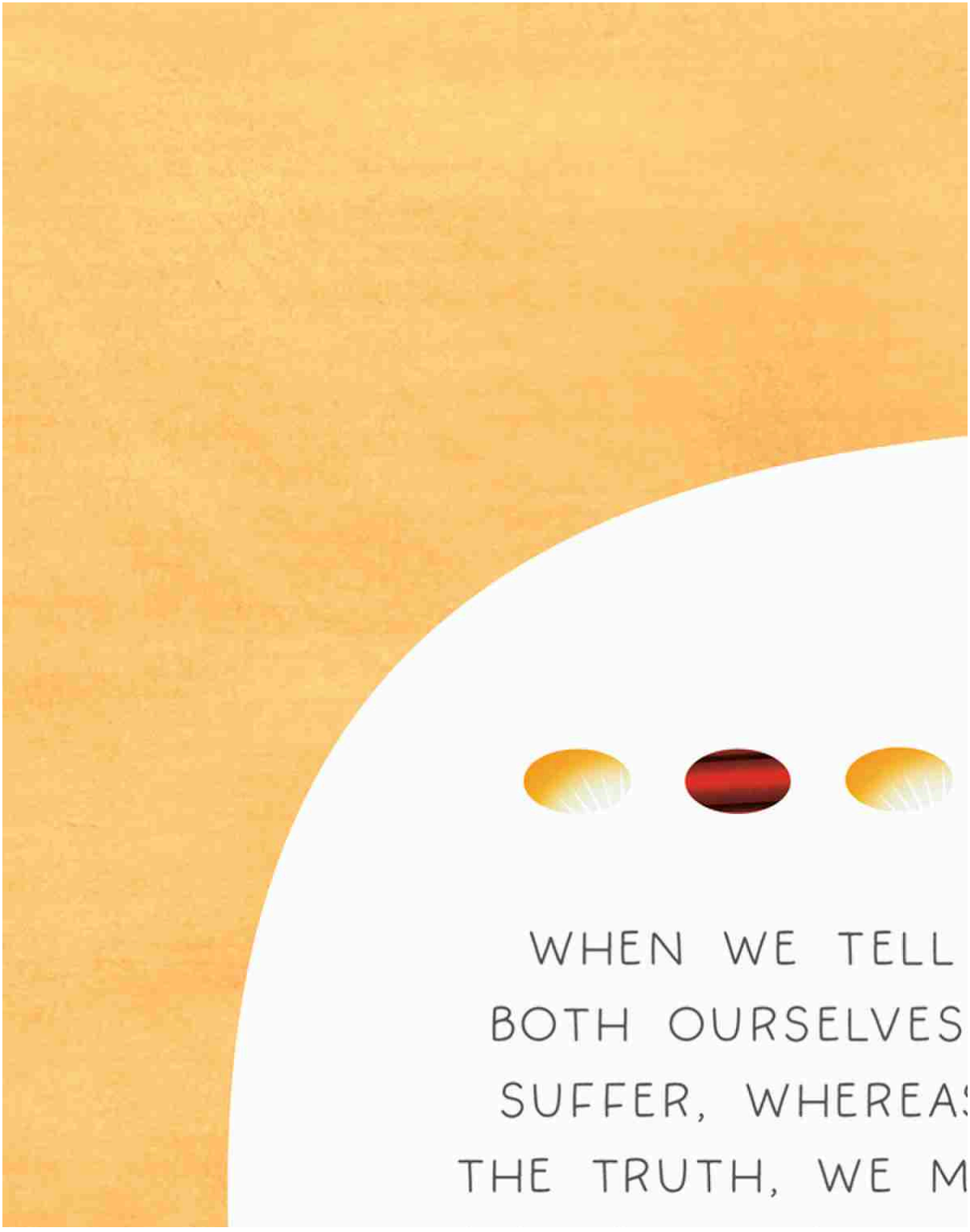
The old woman and little girl looked at each other in disbelief – they were overjoyed at this fantastic news, and happily agreed to the deal. So kind Mr Wallace gave them all his goods and the day's money in exchange for the goblet. Ella put as many bracelets on her arms as she could wear at once, while her Granny went out to buy delicious food and treats for a celebration dinner.

Later that day, mean Mr Johnson returned to the house. When the old lady answered the door, he cunningly said, "I've changed my mind, I've decided to trade the pink bracelet for that dirty old goblet after all, out of the goodness of my heart."

Ella happily explained that it was too late: they had sold it to a kind salesman and got a lot of money for it as it was real gold! Mr Johnson was furious. He didn't feel any guilt at trying to trick the little girl – he was just angry that he'd missed out on all the money. He abandoned his barrow and ran down the road shouting, "Where are you, Wallace? I saw that goblet first! It's mine!"

But Mr Wallace was long gone. He had already sold the goblet and was sharing out the money to help not only his own family, but also the other families in his village.




WHEN WE TELL
BOTH OURSELVES
SUFFER, WHEREA
THE TRUTH, WE M





THE CHAMELEON AND THE CRICKETS

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a chameleon who boasted that she could catch seven juicy crickets. Do you think she succeeded? Let's read the story and find out.

There was once an old chameleon called Maya who could change to any colour. "I can even make myself the same colour as you!" she boasted to her friend Sienna, the orange tree frog. And, just like that, she turned bright amber, like a traffic light.

"When I'm camouflaged, I'm invisible," Maya said, turning emerald- green and hiding herself in the leaves. "Insects crawl past and ..." BAM! She stuck out her long, sticky tongue and grabbed a passing beetle.

"That's good," croaked Sienna. "But anyone can catch a beetle." And she stuck out her own tongue and caught a beetle, too. "Even

with your trick of changing colour," said Sienna, "I bet you don't catch many crickets. They can leap as high as the sky."

"I can catch a juicy cricket any time I like," said Maya. "Crickets are my favourite food."



"Good!" said Sienna. "I shall come to dinner at yours next Saturday. That gives you seven days to catch seven fat crickets for our feast – one cricket every day."

"Simple," boasted Maya. But she knew Sienna was right – catching crickets wasn't easy. On the first day, Maya turned green and hid among the leaves. Soon, a band of singing crickets came by. "Ha!" thought Maya. "I'm invisible." BAM! Out went her tongue.

"Look out!" cried Captain Cricket, and all the crickets leapt safely into the air, out of the chameleon's reach.

On the second day, Maya turned brown and hid among the twigs. But it was just the same. "Look out!" cried Captain Cricket. And off bounced the crickets across the meadow, singing their merry song.

On the third day, the chameleon turned yellow and hid among the dry grass. "Look out!" cried Captain Cricket.

"Three days have gone by," sighed Maya, as the band bounced away. "Sienna will never let me forget it if I don't have seven fat crickets on a plate on Saturday."

So, on the fourth day, the chameleon tried something new. Instead of hiding, she turned blue and lay on top of a hollow log by the river where the crickets could easily see her. "What's the matter?" said

Captain Cricket as he came past. “Aren’t you going to hide and try to eat us?”

“No!” Maya hung her tongue out of the corner of her mouth. “I’m too old and tired. My hunting days are over. I’ll just lie here and rest.”

“Oh, dear!” said the kind captain. “Let us bring you some water.” And he called to his band of crickets. “Follow me to the river. We will each bring back a drop of water on our wings for poor old Maya.”

“Yes, sir!” agreed the crickets, and they all hopped toward the river, singing their song.

But ... BAM! Just as the last cricket was passing by, Maya threw out her tongue like a whip and caught the little insect by the leg. “Got you!” She stuffed the cricket inside the log and blocked up the end with a rock. “Just six more of your friends,” she whispered, “and I will have a juicy feast to share with Sienna.”

Meanwhile, at the front of the troop, Captain Cricket hadn’t noticed anything amiss and he carried on to the river. The crickets collected water and brought it back for the chameleon. Later that night, as they were settling down to sleep, the crickets finally noticed that one of their band was missing. The next day, they were too sad to sing.

“What’s the matter?” asked Maya, still pretending to be exhausted as she lay on the bank.

“We’ve lost one of our comrades,” said the captain. “We’ll bring you water while we search for him.”

And off they all went toward the river. BAM! Maya’s strong, sticky tongue shot out and she caught another cricket from the end of the line. That evening the band were distraught to find they’d lost yet another friend.

“What is happening to us?” the remaining crickets asked the captain.



“I don’t know,” he said. Then, the next day, yet another cricket disappeared. “The one who vanishes is always at the back of the line,” said the captain. “I can’t see what’s happening because I’m at the front.” He rubbed his feet together and thought long and hard.

“Perhaps I was wrong to trust Maya,” he said at last. “Perhaps she has not given up hunting at all. Tomorrow, I’ll walk at the back of the line and see what happens.”

So, the next morning, the crickets set out with the captain at the back. “Here they come!” chuckled Maya. BAM! Out shot her tongue as the last cricket in line hopped by.

But the captain was ready for the devious chameleon. He leapt into the air, safely out of the way. “What have you done with the other crickets?” demanded the captain, landing on a leaf.

“I gobbled them up,” lied Maya. But as she spoke, her eyes darted toward the end of the log.

“No, you didn’t!” shouted the captain, realizing the missing crickets were trapped inside the log. He clapped his legs together and all the crickets began to dance in circles round and round Maya.

“Stop! You’re making me dizzy!” she cried.

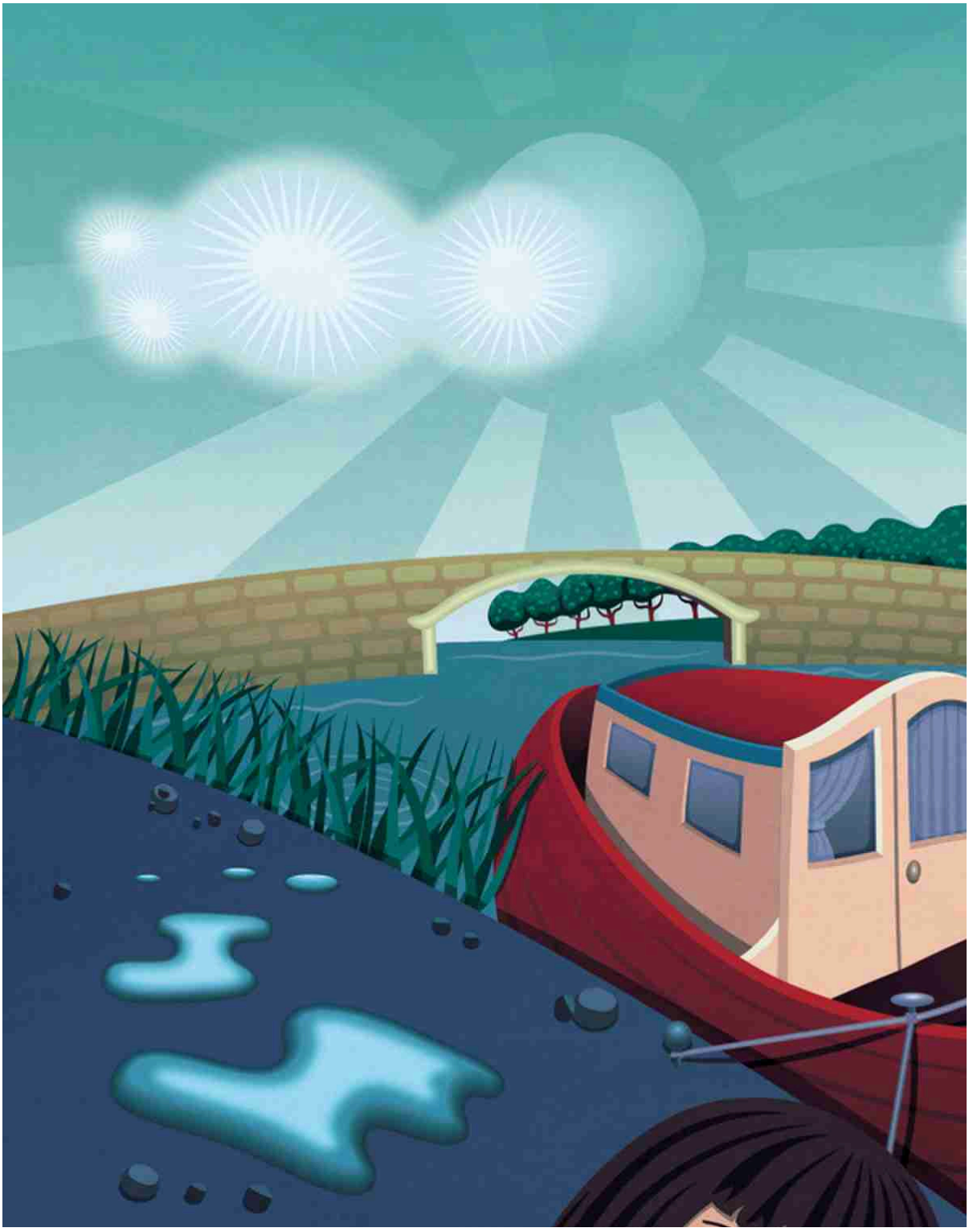
But they just spun faster and faster, distracting Maya while the captain used a stick to lever the stone away from the log, freeing the crickets inside. “We may be small,” he said to Maya, “but we are clever! We worked out your trick and now you have nothing to eat!” Then the whole band bounced away, singing happily once again.

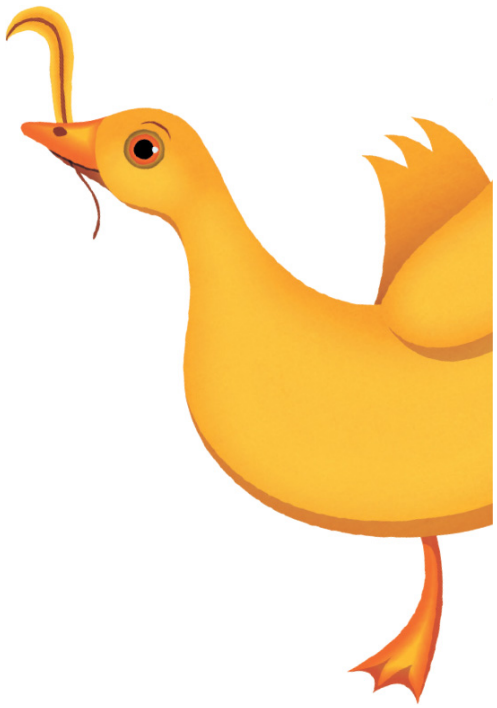
And so Maya had no crickets to offer Sienna. “Not quite the hunter you thought you were?” laughed her friend when she arrived. She thought it was so funny, she didn’t mind that there was nothing at all for supper.





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THE GOLDEN GOOSE

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a little girl called Rosalina, who lived on a rickety old houseboat with her grumpy old aunt. One day, when she was out playing, something amazing happened. What could it be? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... it had been raining for several days, and little Rosalina was getting really fed up of being cooped up in the houseboat. So when the rain finally stopped, she asked her aunt if she could go out to play.

"Yes, but don't go far, as your dinner will be ready soon," said her aunt, as she stirred a big pot on the stove.

So Rosalina put on her shiny red boots and raincoat, and went outside to play. She skipped up and down the river bank, and splished, sploshed and splashed in the muddy puddles.

Then, suddenly she heard a loud honking noise. It seemed to be coming from a clump of tall reeds that grew along the water's edge. But imagine her surprise when she spied a beautiful golden goose there. The bird was flapping his wings and seemed very distressed, as he was tangled up in some old fishing net. When the goose saw her approaching, he became very still and quiet.

"Oh dear, you poor thing. Don't worry, I won't harm you," said Rosalina soothingly. She tiptoed very slowly and cautiously toward the bird so as not to frighten him any more. She stroked his neck and then very gently untangled him from the net. Once free, the goose stretched out his magnificent golden wings and flapped them in gratitude and relief.

"Oh, thank you so much. How can I ever repay you for saving me?" cried the goose, as he danced about in joy. Rosalina laughed and clapped her hands.

"I would like to reward you for what you did. But what can I give you?" he asked.

"You have such beautiful feathers," said Rosalina. "Maybe you could give me one of those?"

"What a good idea!" replied the goose. And he plucked a glistening feather from his golden belly and gave it to the little girl. "If you choose to sell this, you'll get several pieces of gold for it," he continued.

Rosalina held up the feather and it shimmered in the light. "Thank you so much," she said, smiling at the goose. Then, he opened his wings and with a whoosh, flew off.

Rosalina scampered off home. “Auntie! Auntie!” she called as she reached the houseboat. She was hoping that the feather would cheer her aunt up as she had been rather grumpy and unhappy lately.

“What is it, Rosalina? Why are you making so much noise?” her aunt snapped. “And where have you been? Your dinner’s getting cold.”

Rosalina ran down into the kitchen. With great excitement she told her aunt the whole story about the golden goose. “And look what he gave me as a reward!” she cried, holding up the golden feather.



Rosalina had thought that her aunt would be pleased, but instead she just looked angry. “You silly child!” she scolded. “You only got one feather? Why didn’t you ask for more? We could be so rich, we’d never have to worry about money again.”

“I’m sorry, Auntie,” said Rosalina as she started to cry. “I’ll try to find the goose and ask him for more if you want. If I ask him nicely, I think he’ll give me another feather.”

“Well, go quickly and get as many as you can. Hurry up or the goose will have gone,” she said. And as the little girl went on her way, her aunt secretly followed her.

Rosalina ran back up the path until she could see the goose floating serenely on the river. “Dear beautiful golden goose, please

come back! I need your help!” she called. And quick as a flash there he was, flying toward her.

But as the goose landed, Rosalina’s aunt appeared as if from nowhere and caught him in a net. “Got you!” she exclaimed triumphantly. “Oh no! What are you doing, Auntie?” cried Rosalina. “Please, don’t hurt the goose.”

“I’m catching him so that we can take *all* his golden feathers,” replied the old woman. She thrust the poor goose under her arm and, ignoring Rosalina’s protests, rushed back to the houseboat. There, she took the goose into her kitchen and quickly plucked out all his feathers. By the time Rosalina reached home, the goose was completely bald. And her aunt was smiling at the large pile of golden feathers on the table.

Tears streamed down Rosalina’s cheeks as she picked up the goose in her arms. “I’m so sorry,” she whispered, gently stroking the bird’s neck.



“Rosalina, I want you to look after this goose very well,” ordered her aunt. “Then, when its feathers grow back, we can pluck it again.

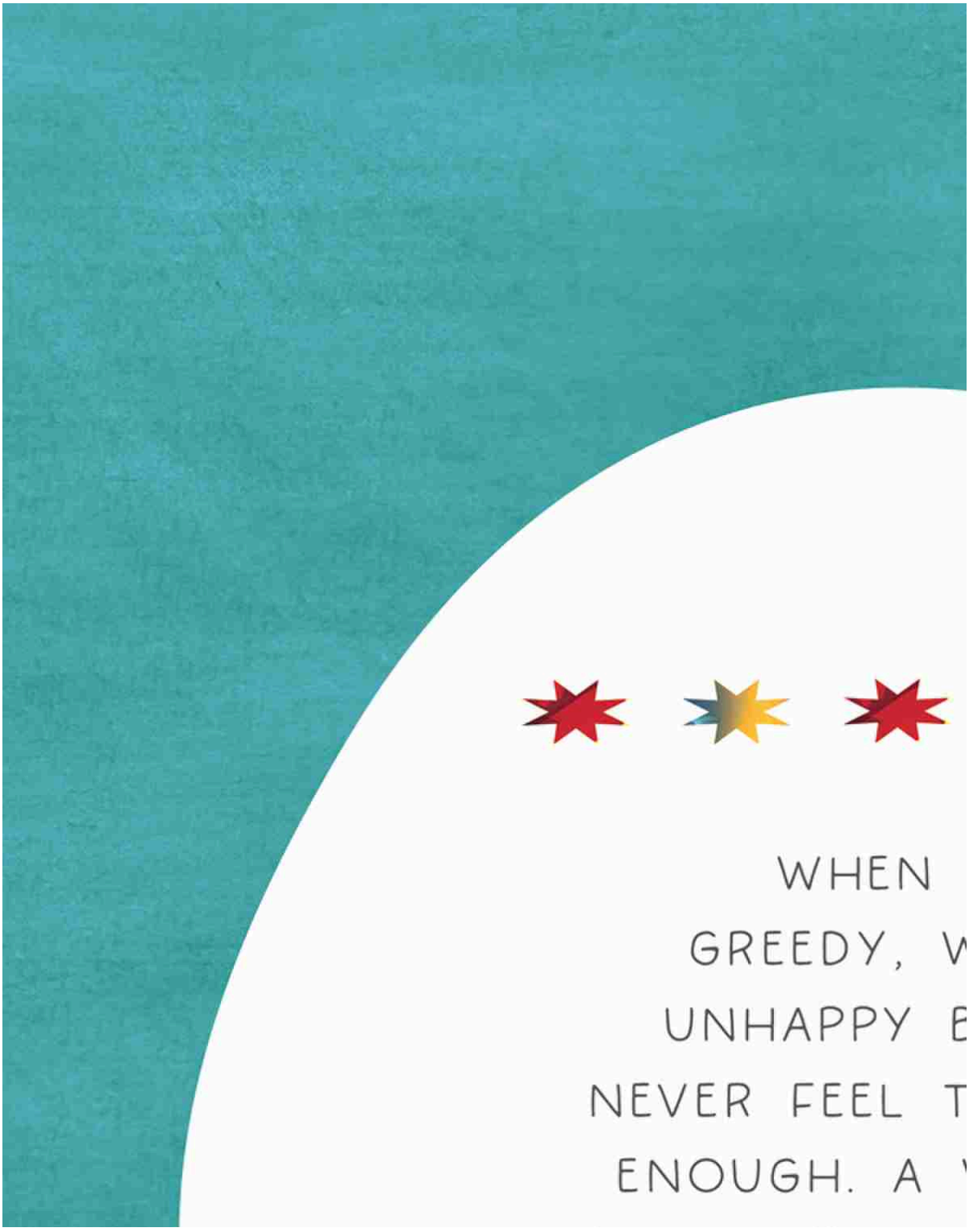
We'll never have to worry about money any more!" And she rubbed her hands greedily.

So Rosalina tended the goose with love and was very careful to keep him away from her aunt. Slowly he recovered from his terrible experience and, as days turned into weeks, his feathers grew back.

One day Rosalina's aunt decided that it was time to pluck the goose again. She asked her niece to bring her the bird, crowing at the thought of the gold she would soon be spending. But when she saw him, she was furious – his feathers were no longer golden, but a soft downy white.

"Once my golden feathers are all gone, they simply grow back white," he explained. "So, you can't use me any more to get rich." With that, he flew straight out of the window, honking farewell to Rosalina, who felt so happy that he was free, as she watched him disappear among the fluffy clouds floating high in the sky.




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BETTY'S BIG DAY

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about an adventurous hen named Betty Doodle-Doo. She longed to join the circus, but she very nearly lost her chance. What do you think can have happened? Let's read the story and find out.

Betty Doodle-Doo flapped her wings with excitement. A travelling circus had pitched its tent in the field behind the farm. She flew up to balance on top of a rope that she'd strung like a high-wire between two trees.

"Wow!" cheeped her little brother and two little sisters, the triplet chicks. "You're an acrobat, Betty!"

Betty clucked and bowed her head. "You know it's my dream to join the circus," she said.

Across the fence, at the neighbouring farm, someone else was watching Betty. Toffi Rooster was from a grand and wealthy family of chickens. He had fallen in love with Betty from afar. "What a beautiful young hen," he thought, and he strutted across the field to talk to her.

“Come and see the circus with me tonight,” he said. “I will buy a pot of golden corn for us to share at the show. Two pots if you wish. I will give you anything!”



“Wow!” Betty was taken aback. She had planned to take the triplets to the circus that night. “I can’t ...” she began.

But Betty’s mother and father had seen Toffi Rooster admiring her and they thought he would be a very good husband for their daughter.

“Of course you should go to the circus with Toffi tonight,” said Betty’s father. “We can take the chicks to see the show tomorrow.”

So Betty and Toffi went to the circus.

Toffi had arranged the best perch in the middle of the front row, with seeds, nuts and corn for them to share.

The show began. Betty stared in amazement with her beak open wide. “Aren’t they magnificent?” she said as the acrobats tumbled and turned. “If only I could be up there with them.”

Then the funny duck clowns came on and she laughed until she cried.

“Thank you for taking me, Toffi,” she said when the show was over. “I had a wonderful time.”

But Toffi had hardly noticed what was happening in the big top. He had eyes only for Betty. As he dropped her back at her hen house, he said, “You’re so beautiful. I’ll tell your parents I want to marry you!” And at the top of his voice he crowed: “I want to be with you for ever!”

Before Betty could say a word, everyone had heard his calls and there was much clucking and crowing with excitement. “Such a rich and handsome groom,” said her mother. “What a magnificent wedding we’ll have.”

Betty thought of her dream to join the circus. Perhaps being the centre of attention at her own wedding would be just as much fun as performing for the crowd in the big top. “Well, maybe ...” she said.

“I must go,” said Toffi. “I must tell my parents the plan.” And he strutted away across the fields. “See you at dawn the day after tomorrow,” he called back to her. “We shall be married in the light of the rising sun.”

Betty’s family could talk of nothing but the Roosters’ magnificent home: the feed shed full of grain and the nesting boxes stuffed with the softest hay. Betty imagined the fine life she would have at the fancy farm.

Toffi’s family were also delighted to hear the news. But they were very superstitious, too. They wanted to be sure the marriage would bring good fortune for their son. “You must wear this garland of berries for good luck,” clucked his mother, placing the garland around his neck.

However, the next day the Rooster family’s trusted advisor Sniffles Baloney, the turkey, shook his head. “That garland will do no good,” he said. Usually, they consulted him about *everything*. But Toffi had got carried away. He had made an important decision all by himself – and Sniffles wasn’t having that. “No. No. No!” he scolded. “You can’t

get married at dawn the day after tomorrow. It would be most unlucky. You need to wait."

Toffi was crestfallen, but he agreed. With a heavy heart, he retreated to his coop. However, nobody thought to tell Betty that the wedding had been postponed.

So, as the sun rose the next morning, Betty stood wearing a wedding dress, waiting for her groom. For the first time since Toffi's proposal, Betty had time to think about what she really wanted. "I don't want to get married! I want to join the circus," she said. But no one was listening.



“He will be here soon,” clucked her mother, glancing across the empty fields. “He’d better be,” chirped her father. “I have filled three troughs with corn for the wedding feast.” But by the time the sun was high in the sky, there was still no sign of Toffi. “This is boring!” tweeted the chicks. “We can’t wait any longer.”

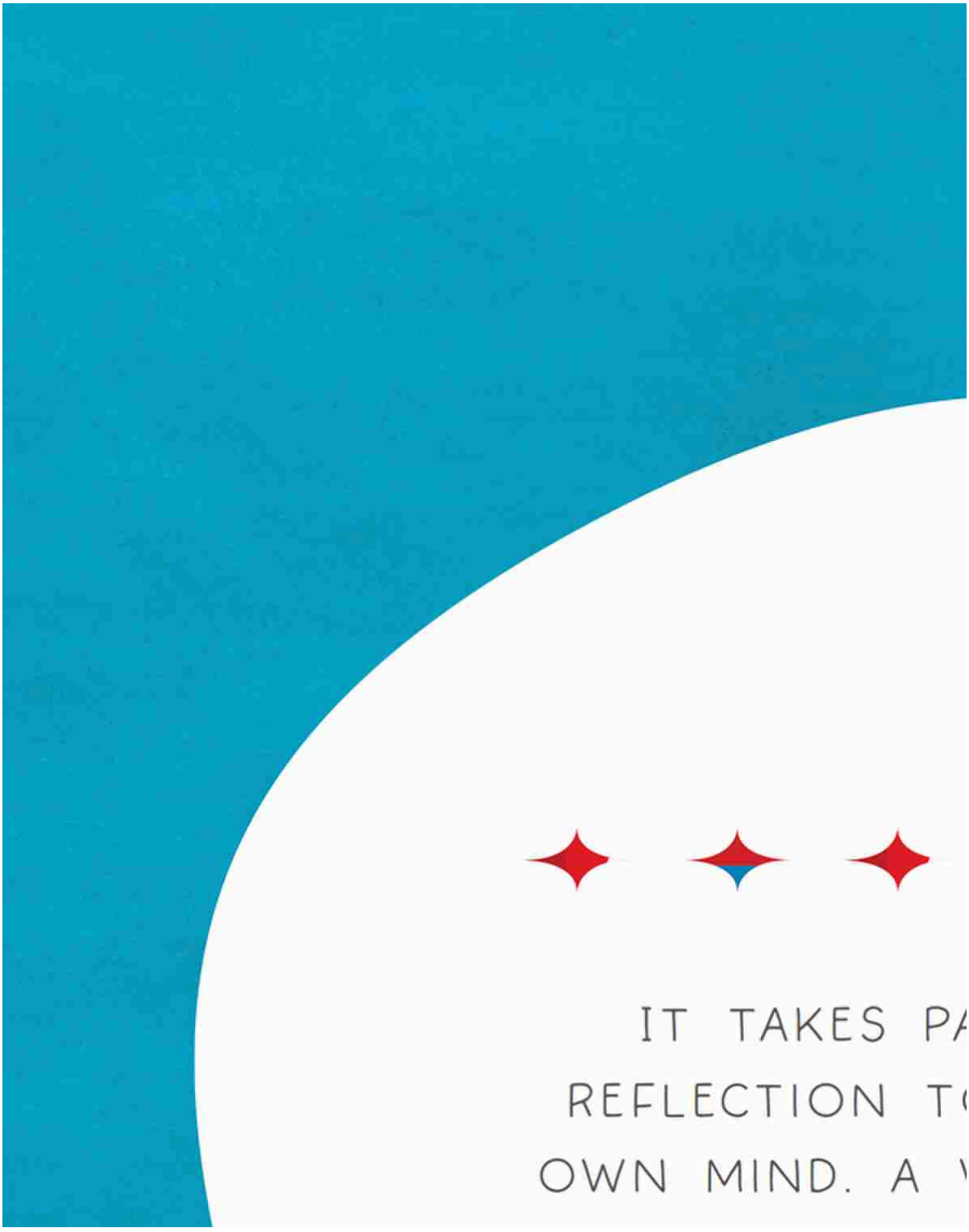
“No, we can’t!” said Betty. Two fields away an excited crowd was gathering outside the big top as the circus performers got ready for their next show. All Betty wanted was to join them.

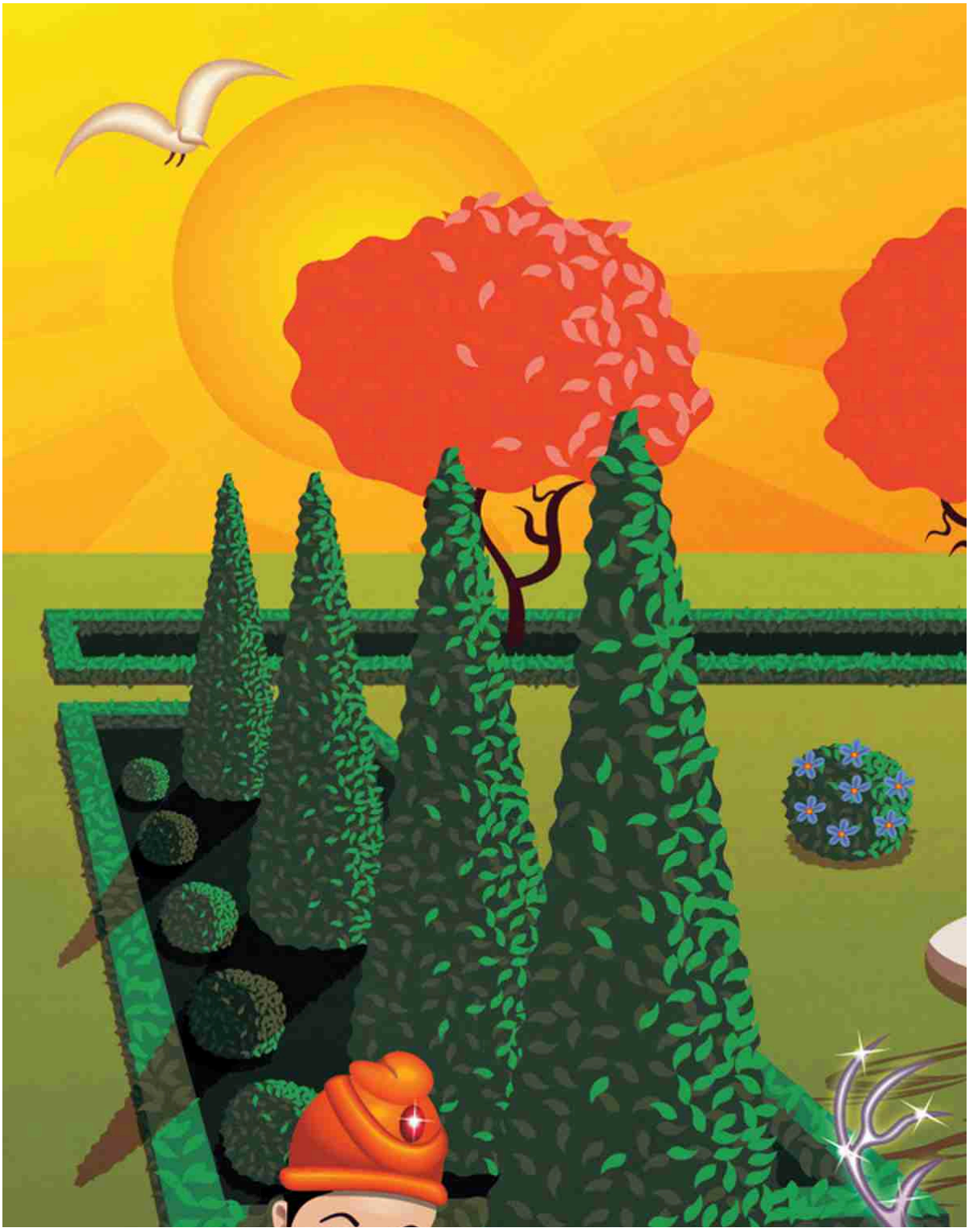
“I know you want the best for me,” she said to her family, “but this wedding plan has made me realize all the more that I *have* to follow my dream!” She hugged and kissed her parents goodbye. “How lucky that Toffi didn’t come! Please come and watch me very soon,” she said, as she set off toward the big top.

Meanwhile, on the Roosters’ farm, Sniffles Baloney had finally decided the time was right. “This is it,” he told Toffi. “This is the perfect time for a lucky wedding.” Toffi straightened his feathers and hopped out of his coop. He ran across the fields. But when he arrived at Betty’s farm, the little chicks sighed and said, “You’re too late!”

“She’s gone?” asked Toffi in disbelief. The chicks and Mr and Mrs Doodle- Doo nodded. Toffi looked across at the circus. “I wish I hadn’t listened to Sniffles. I should have been brave enough to follow my own heart,” he said. “But I am glad that Betty was able to follow hers.”




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THE KIND AND WISE STAG

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a beautiful stag called Dinos. He lived deep in the heart of a great forest of giant trees with all his animal friends ... until one day everything changed! Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... Dinos was no ordinary stag – he was the wisest animal in the forest. And he looked special, too, as he had a beautiful amethyst jewel embedded in his forehead and shimmering purple antlers.

When he woke this particular morning, everything was wet, and droplets of rain shone like diamonds on the grass. There had been a big storm during the night, and the dark clouds were just scuttling off over the horizon, as the smiling sun arrived in the sky. As usual, Dinos made his way down to the river for a morning drink. But the storm had made the water angry, so it was surging along faster than usual.

As he stood watching the raging river, he heard a voice calling, “Help! Help! Please help!” Suddenly, a man floated into view, around a bend in the river. He was frantically waving his arms and, every few moments, he disappeared under the water and then bobbed up, spluttering.

The wise stag thought quickly and called out to the man, “Look up! Grab the branches above you!”

The man stretched out his arms, caught hold of a branch and held on tight. Dinos then waded into the water and said to him, “Take hold of my neck.” The man was so shocked to see a stag with shimmering purple antlers and a jewel in his forehead that he let go of the branch. But, thankfully, he just managed to catch hold of Dinos, who pulled him out of the water and up the river bank.

The man, whose name was Arthur, was soaked and exhausted, but immensely grateful to the kind and wise stag. He thanked him time and time again for saving him and asked him what he could do to repay him. “I ask only one thing in return,” replied Dinos. “Just give me your word that you will never tell anyone about me or where I live, because there are many wicked and greedy men who will try to hunt me for my jewel.”

Full of gratitude, Arthur placed his hand on his heart and vowed never to tell anyone about the stag or where he lived. And then Dinos led the man to a path which would lead him out of the forest.

Several years passed. One day, the queen of the land, who lived far from the great forest, heard a rumour about a wise and beautiful stag with twinkling purple antlers and a magnificent purple jewel in his forehead. Intrigued, she wished to see this splendid animal, and she asked her husband, the king, to find it for her.

Now the king was a kind man who liked to please his wife, so he offered a large reward to anyone who could help him to catch the

special stag.

When Arthur heard of the king's search he was overcome by greed and forgot all about the promise he had made to Dinos. He went to the king and led him and his men to the great forest, where they lay in wait for the stag and very soon captured him.

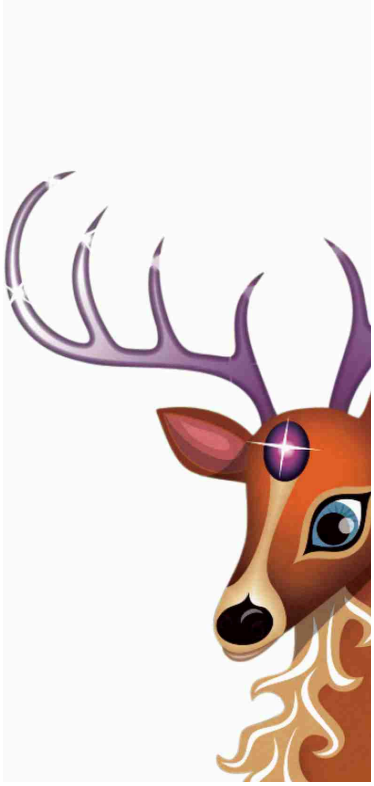
The king was overjoyed to have found the beautiful creature and ordered his men to look after the stag well. They tied him to the back of a cart and gave him fresh hay to eat, and the king even went personally to reassure the stag that he would not be harmed. But when he saw the stag, he noticed that he was crying. "What's the matter?" he asked gently. "Have my men hurt you?"

A single tear ran down Dinos's cheek. "No, I've been treated very well, thank you. But I'm upset because I think that someone may have betrayed me. I'm very careful to keep away from humans. How did you find me?" he asked softly.

The king was so dismayed to see the stag weeping that he just pointed to greedy Arthur, who had been trying to hide nearby. The man lowered his eyes and looked at the ground. The king asked Dinos, "Do you know this man?'"

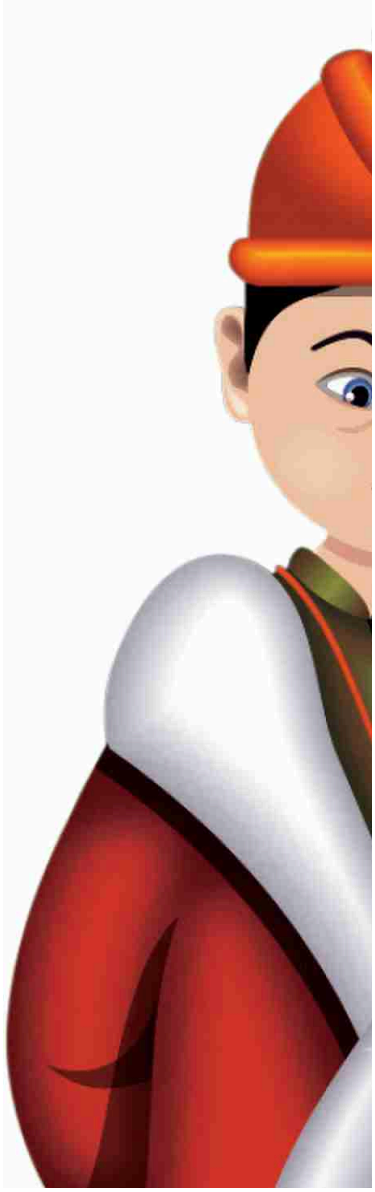
The stag then told him how he had saved Arthur's life some years before and the man had promised never to tell anyone about him or to mention where he lived.

When the king, who was honest and just, heard that the stag had been captured only because Arthur had broken his promise, he grew red with anger and ordered Arthur to be taken away and taught a lesson.

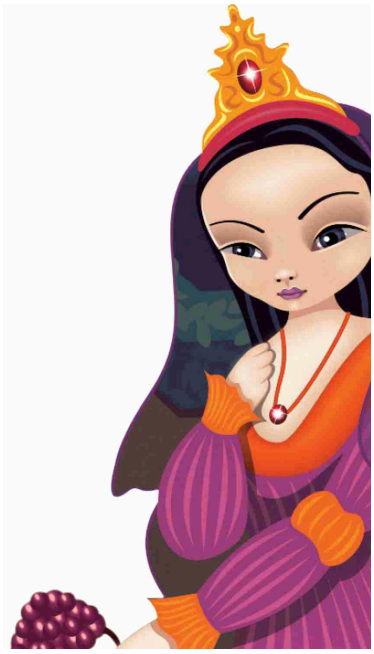


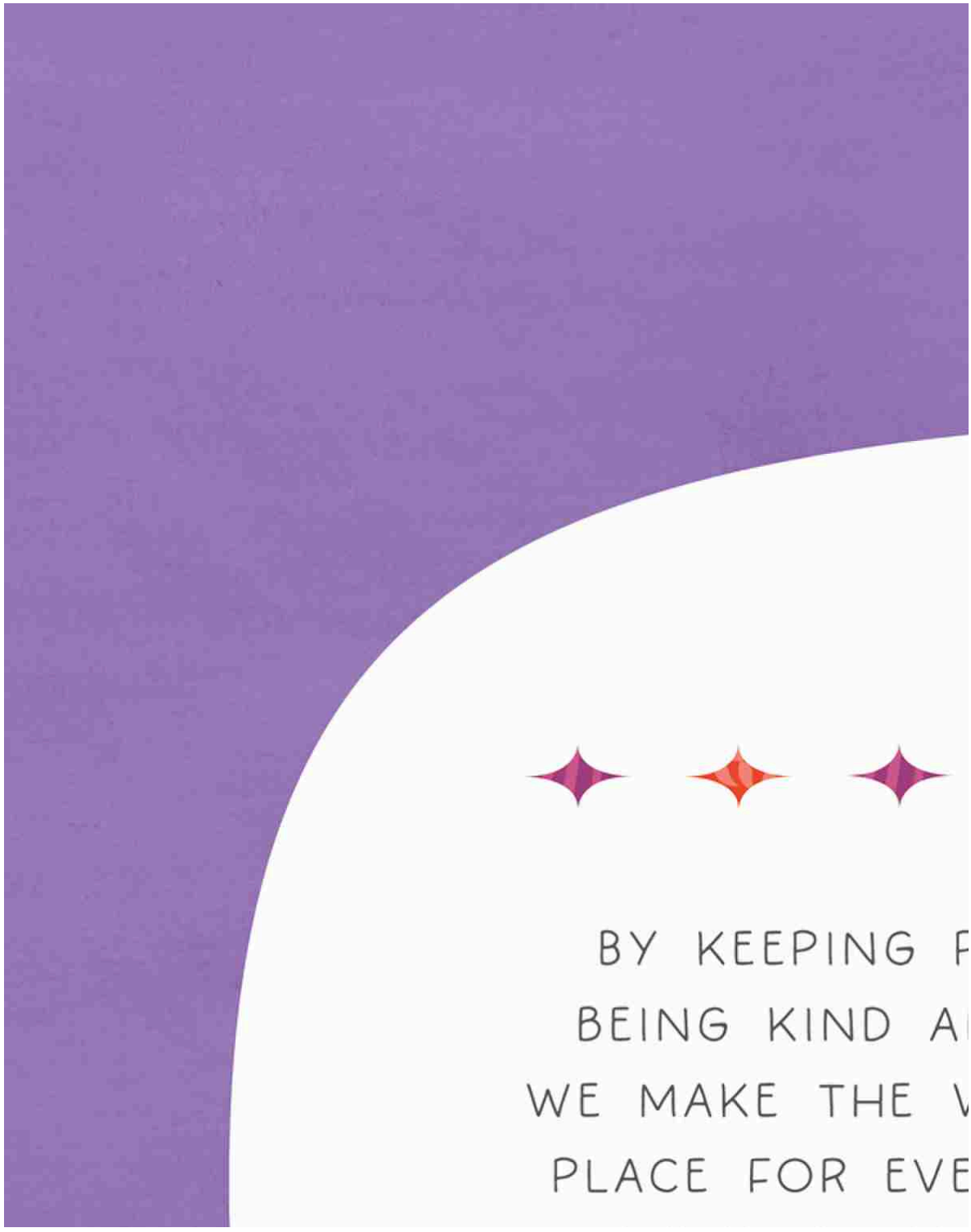
But the stag, in his compassion, begged the king to forgive the man and let him go. And the king was so moved by the deer's kindness and wisdom that he agreed.

Then, he released the stag and invited him to come and meet his wife the queen, who was so eager to see him after all she had heard about him. Dinos agreed and they all returned to the castle.

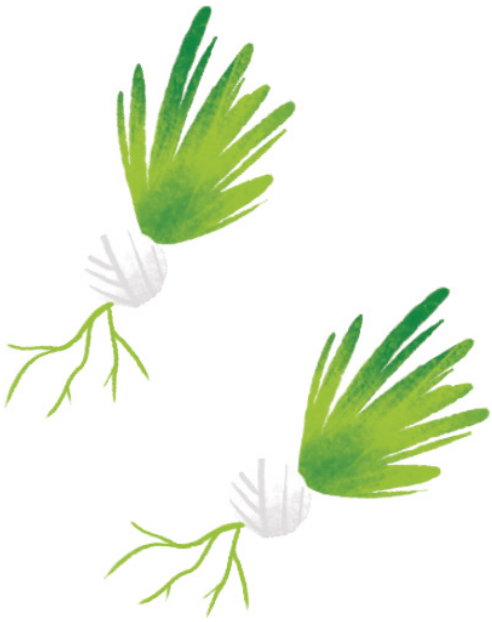


The queen and the stag soon became firm friends – she loved to feed him his favourite grapes and he appreciated her gentle kindness. At last the stag felt safe, no longer fearing that he would be hunted for his valuable jewel and antlers. Before long, Dinos became the king’s most trusted advisor, helping the monarch to rule the kingdom fairly and wisely by honouring promises made to his subjects and never allowing him to be influenced by greed.




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UNCLE ONION'S GARDEN

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a wise old gardener called Uncle Onion. One day, he left his garden in the care of his young nephew. What do you think happened to the plants and flowers? Let's read the story and find out.

Uncle Onion was singing to his tomatoes when there was an almighty clatter from his potting shed. He stopped singing, hobbled over and threw open the door. Basil, his nephew, was surrounded by broken flower pots.

"Whatever is going on?" harumphed Uncle Onion.

"A huge mosquito bit me. I tried to hit it with the spade," cried Basil. "I didn't mean to smash the pots. The mosquito just wouldn't

stay still!” The tiny mosquito pirouetted in the corner of the shed, took a bow and buzzed off past Uncle Onion. “It’s getting away!” shouted Basil, wildly swinging the spade, nearly hitting his uncle on the head.

“Never mind the mosquito! Look at the terrible mess you’ve made!” roared Uncle Onion in a deep, angry voice.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Onion,” said Basil. “I promise I’ll make it up to you.”



“If you really want to make it up to me, you can start by clearing up this mess,” scowled Uncle Onion. “I have to go to the market to buy some seeds. When I get back I want to see this shed spick and span and every plant in the garden watered. Can you do that?”



Basil was too embarrassed to admit that he had never watered a garden before. “Of course!” he said.

Uncle Onion’s garden had lots of different plants. Basil gulped. He had no idea how much water he needed for each one. “I’ll ask my friends, the beavers. They’re so clever,” he thought. Basil whistled

loudly. In no time at all, three mischievous young beavers – Teeny, Tiny and Toty – rolled through the garden gate, giggling and tickling each other. When Basil told them about chasing the mosquito with his spade, they fell about with laughter.

“But things are serious now,” said Basil. “Uncle Onion is very cross. I want to prove to him how responsible I can be. But I’ve no idea how to water the garden properly.”

“No problem!” said Toty in his best grown-up voice. “We’ll be able to help!” Teeny and Tiny nodded.

“Awesome!” cried Basil. “The water is in those big barrels over there, and the watering cans are next to them. I think we just have to dunk a watering can in a barrel to fill it with water, then wave it above the plants like rain. I saw Uncle Onion do it once.”

“That’s right!” said Toty wisely. “Now you go and clear up the mess in the shed and we’ll sort out the watering.”

“Thank you,” said Basil, and he hurried off, trusting that the beavers would know what to do.

At first, the beavers managed only to soak themselves, which they found hilarious. But, after several tries with a watering can, they started to get the hang of it.



“How do we know if we’ve used enough water?” asked Teeny.

“No idea,” said Tiny. “We could ask Basil.”

“Don’t be silly!” said Toty. “Basil doesn’t know! That’s why he asked us in the first place. We’re the clever ones!”



“Good point. I know! Let’s pull the plants up and see if the roots are wet,” suggested Teeny.

“Brilliant!” cried Toty. And, with great enthusiasm, the beavers methodically watered each plant, then pulled it out of the ground to check that the roots were wet.

“This watering can is too small!” exclaimed Teeny after several minutes. “I can’t be bothered to keep refilling it and then pulling up every plant.”

“Time for a rest!” said Tiny, throwing himself on the ground, pretending to faint from exhaustion.

“Exactly!” agreed Teeny, falling onto Tiny.

“Pile on! Mud bath!” called Toty, throwing himself on top of the others. The beavers rolled around in the wet soil, covering themselves in mud and giggling wildly.

“I’ve had a brilliant idea,” said Teeny. “Rather than filling the watering can, why don’t we just take the lid off one of the barrels and roll it down the garden? The water will spray out and the whole garden will be watered!”

“Awesome!” agreed the other two. The beavers took the lid off the biggest barrel and, with lots of huffing and puffing, pushed it over onto its side.

Water gushed out and the barrel started rolling down the garden. “Look out!” cried Teeny. The little beavers scampered through the mud, diving out of the barrel’s path. “Oh no!” shouted Toty as the barrel gathered speed, crushing several rows of flowers. “Yikes!” yelled Tiny as the barrel headed for the veg patch. It was only at this point that Basil heard the beavers’ shrieks and yelps. He rushed outside, just in time to see the barrel explode against the wall – and Teeny, Tiny and Toty collapse into giggles.

“What have you *done*?” Basil gasped. Before the beavers could answer, they heard a deep roar from the garden gate. “What on earth is going on?”

“Yikes! It’s Uncle Onion! Run for it!” cried Teeny. And without so much as a sorry, the little beavers were gone.

“Basil!” thundered Uncle Onion. “My garden ...”

“I asked my friends the beavers for help,” quivered Basil. “I didn’t know what to do and I thought they did.”

“Beavers?! Why didn’t you ask *me*?” sighed Uncle Onion, his voice softening. Basil shrugged his shoulders and sniffed. “Come on, now. There’s no point crying over sticky mud. What’s done is done. And I’ll teach you how we can sort it all out.” He handed Basil the spade. “Start by digging holes for the plants that have been ripped up ... And get those beavers back. We’ll need help to get this done.”

“Yes, Uncle,” said Basil, and he whistled for the beavers.

Everyone worked hard – even Teeny, Tiny and Toty. “Where should I put this plant?” asked Toty, suddenly keen to learn from the wise, old uncle.

“Over there, in that big hole Teeny and Tiny have dug,” said Uncle Onion. Then he looked at the little beavers and his nephew all working so hard and smiled. “You know what?” he said, putting his arm round Basil’s shoulders. “I might just make gardeners out of you yet.”



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THE GOLDEN SHELL

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about a mermaid called Marina who wore a beautiful golden shell pendant around her neck. One day, she lent it to the Octopus Queen. What do you think happened? Let's read the story and find out.

Marina was a wonderful singer who travelled the oceans performing her enchanting songs. Once, she came to the underwater palace of the Octopus Queen.

"Shall I sing for Your Majesty?" she asked.

"Oh yes!" cried the Octopus Queen. She had heard of Marina's fame and couldn't wait to hear the young mermaid sing. But, as soon as Marina stepped on stage, it was not only her voice that captivated the queen – it was also the huge, shimmering gold shell she wore. As Marina sang, the golden necklace glistened and the queen was entranced.

"What a beautiful shell," she said to the young mermaid when her performance was over.

“Thank you,” said Marina. “My father gave it to me. It’s the most precious thing I own.”

“It’s fabulous,” said the queen. “I wish I could wear it tonight. I’m giving a royal dinner. I’d be the envy of every underwater king and queen with that golden shell around my neck.”

“Then you must wear it to your dinner,” said Marina kindly. “As long as I can have it back tomorrow.”

Delighted by Marina’s generosity, the queen promised, “I will return it first thing tomorrow morning.”



Marina unhooked the shell and gave it to the queen, who attached it to a necklace of her own and fastened it around her neck.

The queen was indeed the envy of all who saw her.

“A gorgeous necklace,” gasped the Queen of Crabs.

“A rare jewel indeed,” agreed the Empress of Sharks.

That night, once the guests had gone, the Octopus Queen sighed. “I wish I could keep the shell,” she said. Then a dreadful idea came to her. “Why *shouldn’t* I keep it? I am the queen, after all. I can have whatever I want.”

Next morning, Marina arrived to take back her shell. “I hope you enjoyed the party, Your Highness. May I have my pendant back now?” she asked.

“Oh dear!” The Octopus Queen tried her best to look sad. “I’m afraid I can’t give it back.”

“Why?” stammered Marina. “What’s happened?”

“Erm ...” The queen glanced around her coral palace, trying desperately to think of an excuse. “Er ... your necklace has vanished,” she said unconvincingly.

“Vanished?” Marina felt a ripple of fear. “How?”

“Er ... it was eaten by a fish!” said the queen.

“A fish?” A tear rolled down Marina’s cheek. She knew the queen was lying, but she wasn’t brave enough to challenge her. And anyway, before she could say another word, the queen turned away. “I’m sorry I can’t return your trinket,” she said, and fled to her royal chamber.

“Oh, Marina!” said an angel fish swimming nearby. “Don’t cry. How could a fish have eaten that big shell?”

“Oh, I know,” Marina sighed. “But the queen is never going to give it back! She has kept it for herself.”

“What a thief!” gasped a passing clownfish.

“What a scoundrel!” agreed a blue tang, appearing from behind a piece of coral.



“Steal something of hers!” said the angel fish. “She has whole caves full of jewels. Get your revenge!”

The other fish agreed, but Marina shook her head. “No,” she said. “I’ll wait. I’m sure the queen will do the right thing. A stolen necklace can bring her no pleasure.”

In her chamber the queen had slipped the golden shell around her neck again. But Marina was right. As the queen admired the jewel, she sighed. She knew she could never leave her chamber wearing the necklace. If she did, everyone would know her story about the fish had been a lie, and she would become known as a common thief.

From beneath the window, in the coral reef below, the queen heard Marina’s soft, sweet voice. The song she sang was beautiful but very sad – a lament for her lost golden shell, a precious gift from her father.

Feeling guilty, the queen slammed shut her box of jewels. “I can’t wear the necklace to Marina’s concert tonight ... And the mermaid sounds so sad.”

She knew what she had to do.

“Marina!” she called, as she hurried out of her chamber and into the coral reef below. “It’s very strange but I think the fish who swallowed your necklace must have spat it out again. Look what I found!” And she held out the shimmering pendant.

“What a fibber!” muttered the blue tang.

“She’s still not telling the truth,” sighed the clownfish.

“She’s a royal disgrace!” grumbled the angel fish.

But Marina just smiled.



“Oh! How clever of you to find my lost necklace, Your Majesty!” she cried. “Thank you for giving it back.”

“You’re welcome!” said the queen. But being face to face with Marina reminded her of how kind Marina had been to lend her the necklace in the first place. Blushing and squirming, the queen couldn’t keep up her lie. “I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I did something terrible.”

Marina put her finger to the queen's lips. "I have the pendant. That's all that matters," she said. Then she smiled brighter than the golden jewel itself. "Why don't you wear it to my concert tonight? Keep the necklace safe for me while I perform."

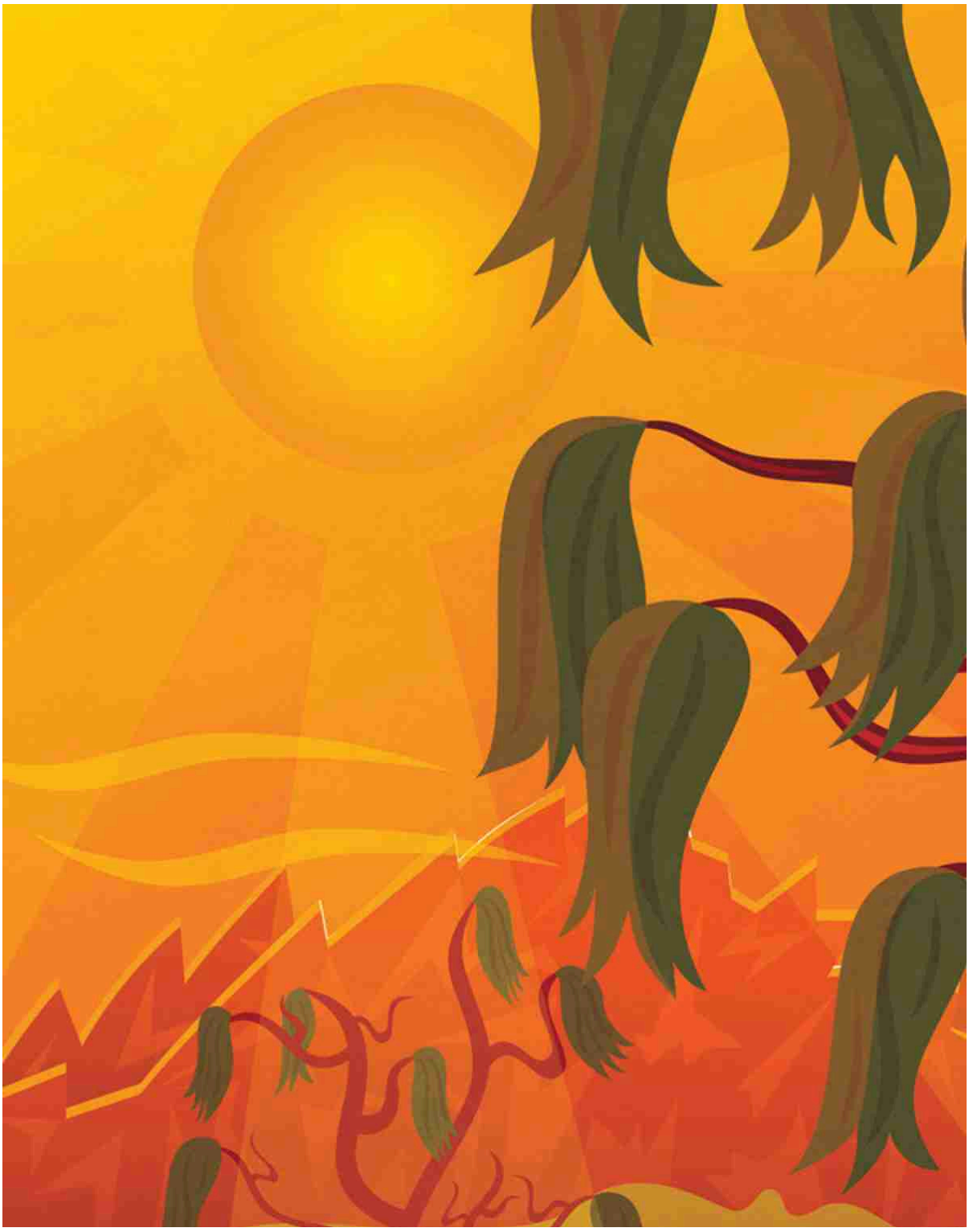
"Really?" the queen gasped. "You'd trust me?"

"Of course," said Marina. "I know this time you'll give it back to me."

"As long as there aren't any more hungry fish about!" muttered the clownfish. The blue tang and the angel fish giggled cheekily among the coral.

But Marina and the queen didn't hear. The mermaid was already swimming off to get ready for the concert and the Octopus Queen had hurried off to find the perfect tiara to match the golden shell ... even though she knew it would be hers for only one more night.


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THE MISCHIEVIOUS MONKEY

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a mischievous monkey who liked to play tricks on an old buffalo. That is, until one day when he learned a very important lesson. Would you like to know what this was? Let's see if we can find out!

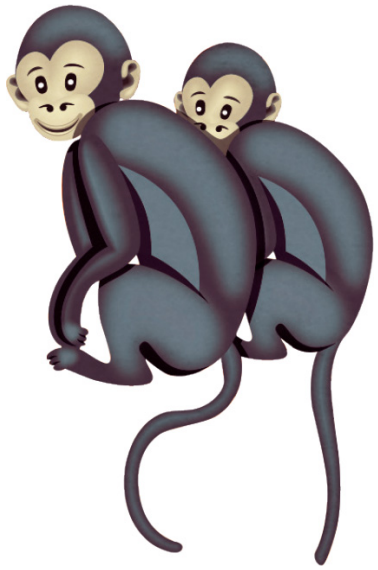
Now ... the naughty little monkey and the kind-hearted old buffalo both lived in an ancient forest next to a great grassland. Every day, when the sun was at its highest in the cloudless sky and it got really, really hot, the old buffalo would wander to the edge of the forest and rest in the cool shade of the trees. There, he would doze until the late afternoon. And then, when the heat was not so fierce, he would go out to graze with his herd on the grassland.

As for the mischievous monkey, his home was in the branches of a great tree. And every day, as the other monkeys sat grooming each

other and chatting, he liked to wait for the old buffalo to doze off below.

“Hee hee! I think I’ll have some fun,” he would say gleefully, clapping his little hands.

One day, the monkey waited until he was certain that the buffalo was sound asleep. Then, he swung down and, hanging on to a branch by his tail just above the old buffalo’s head, he screeched: “Grooawww!”



The poor buffalo got such a fright. He jumped to his feet and looked around but couldn’t see anyone.

“What was that?” he muttered.

“Hee, hee, hee ... got you!” laughed the little monkey, as he threw leaves and nuts down on the old buffalo. Then, he scampered off into the trees, howling with laughter.

The buffalo sighed, shook his head and wandered off. “That little fellow gets naughtier by the day,” he thought to himself, and went in search of a quieter place.

Soon he found himself another inviting patch of shade and settled down to finish his afternoon nap. “What a lovely spot!” he said before drifting off to sleep, unaware that he had been followed by his cheeky little “friend”.

The monkey had swung over the tree tops and once again sat in the branches, just above the old buffalo, listening carefully. As soon as he heard him start to snore, he crept silently down from the tree and along the ground through the grass to pull the buffalo’s tail. “Ow! Ow! Ow!” yelped the startled old buffalo. He got to his feet and was about to leave when he heard laughter.

“Hee, hee, hee ... got you again!” laughed the naughty monkey as he swung up into the tree. Before he disappeared, he looked back and stuck out his tongue at the old buffalo.

“Oh dear ... it looks like I’m not going to get any rest today,” lamented the weary old animal.

“You’re a big strong buffalo and you have sharp horns, so why do you let that mischievous monkey bother you all the time?” asked a squeaky little voice.

“What? Who said that? Oh, I’m so tired that I must be hearing voices!” said the buffalo to no one in particular.

“Hey, over here!” called the voice.

Looking around again the buffalo spotted the source of the comment – a smiling little snail with a shimmering brown shell, who was sitting on a rock near the tree.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Mr Snail, I didn’t see you there,” said the old buffalo.

“That’s all right,” chirped Mr Snail, “I‘m small and not easy to spot. But you’re big and strong. Why don’t you put a stop to that little monkey’s bad behaviour?”

“I don’t like bothering or hurting anyone,” replied the buffalo, “not even a tricky little monkey who shows me no respect.” The kind-hearted buffalo then bowed to the snail and said, “Thank you for your concern, Mr Snail, but please don’t worry about me.” And he turned to wander back toward the grassland and find his herd.

Later that afternoon, a lone buffalo came to the edge of the forest. He had a very bad temper and because of this all the other buffaloes usually avoided him. He had been walking for many hours and was very tired, so he settled down for a rest at the foot of a tree and fell asleep.



The mischievous monkey was just finishing a rather large banana when he looked down from his branch high up in the tree and noticed the sleeping buffalo.

“Oh, he’s back, is he? Time for some more mischief!” the monkey chuckled to himself, not noticing that this was a different buffalo.

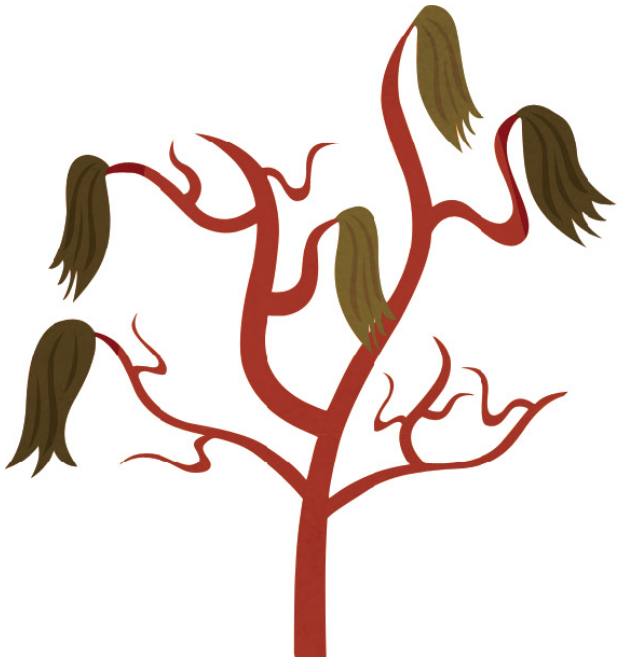
So, he swung down from branch to branch and somersaulted through the air onto the sleeping buffalo's back. The lone buffalo roared and shot to his feet. "What do you think you're doing?" he growled, as he threw the little monkey off his back with all his might.

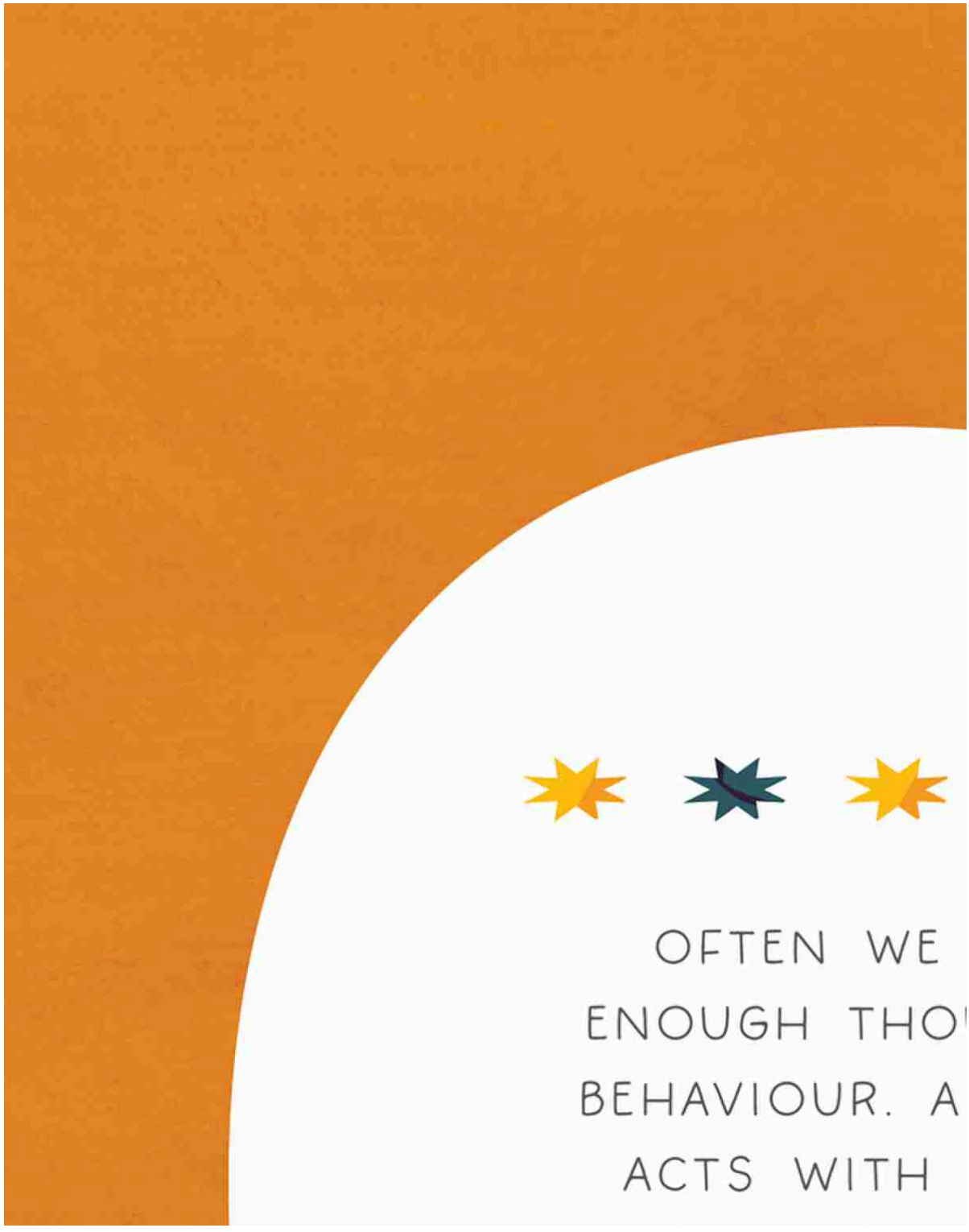
"Ouch!" cried the monkey, as he hit the ground with a thud. Shocked, he realized that it was the wrong buffalo. And now he was in big trouble because the angry buffalo was about to charge at him. The monkey froze with fear.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, the kind old buffalo appeared, warded off the furious beast and gently scooped the little monkey to safety! The wild buffalo stamped his foot, snorted and trotted off unhappily.

"Oh, thank you!" cried the little monkey gratefully to the old buffalo. "But I've been so mean to you. Why did you take the trouble to save me?"

"It was nothing," replied the wise old buffalo modestly. "I just try to treat everyone as I'd like to be treated myself." And with that, he trundled off to have a rest in another lovely patch of shade he'd spotted.




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TINTORETTO, THE MOUSE FROM TOWN

Take a deep, relaxing breath, snuggle down and listen carefully to this tale about Colin, a country mouse who made friends with a town mouse. What do you think happened to them? Let's read the story and find out.

After a year in the big city, Colin, the country mouse, was coming home. He'd loved the noise and bustle for a while, but now he longed to return to his peaceful home at the edge of a cornfield. His friend Tintoretto, a shabby, grey town mouse, was coming home with him.

"Almost there now," he told Tintoretto. In excitement, Tintoretto twitched his ragged ear (the result of a narrow escape from an alley cat) and swished his stubby tail (a cart had run over it). That his friend looked rough and ragged didn't matter to Colin. Tintoretto was

kind and brave – just last week Tintoretto had saved Colin from nearly drowning in a city drain.

“Tintoretto,” he grinned, “I can’t wait to show you the cornfield and introduce you to my friends and family.”

“I can’t wait to meet them!” said Tintoretto. “I know how much you’ve missed them while you’ve been away.”

As the pair reached the edge of the cornfield, little mice began to appear, twitching their whiskers and squeaking with excitement when they saw Colin on the path. “Welcome home!” they cried.

“Hello!” Colin scampered forward. “Meet my friend, Tintoretto. He’s come with me from the city.”

“Tintoretto? What a strange name,” tittered Colin’s cousin Carol. And all her brothers and sisters began to giggle under their breath, too.

“Look at his ragged ear,” whispered one.

“And look at his tail,” squeaked another. “It’s so short.”

“And his dull fur. He’s almost like a rat!” squealed a third.

Colin knew that his friend had heard every word. “Don’t worry,” he explained. “My cousins aren’t used to strangers. They’ve never been beyond this cornfield. As soon as they get to know you, they’ll treat you as a friend.”

“If they’re as kind as you, I’m sure they will,” Tintoretto replied, smiling.

That night there was a great celebration to welcome Colin home. The country mice brought corn from the field, berries from the hedgerows and acorns from the wood. Everyone wanted to hear of Colin’s adventures.

“Tell us about the markets!” cried Cousin Charlie.

“Yes! Were there cheese stalls?” asked Cousin Carol.

“What about the alley cats?” shuddered Cousin Chester.

“Well ...” As Colin began to answer, he glanced down the long, wooden table and saw that his friend was staring into space, looking lost and alone. “I was only a visitor to the big city,” he said. “If you really want to know what it’s like, you should ask Tintoretto. He’s lived there all his life.”



No one moved. “Why are none of you speaking to Tintoretto?” whispered Colin. “Why aren’t you making him feel welcome?”

“I don’t want to talk to a shabby town mouse,” said Carol. “I don’t like the way he looks.”

“He smells strange. Like oil and gas and the city streets,” said Charlie.

“I don’t understand his strange accent,” said Chester.

Colin stood up. “I’m ashamed of you all,” he said. “Tintoretto’s family made me welcome, but you’ve decided he’s different and you’re not trying to be kind.” He stood up and went to sit with Tintoretto. The two friends shared a pile of ripe corn.

As the sun set over the fields, the mice began to dance and sing. It was a great party, but still no one spoke to Tintoretto. Instead, they nudged each other and whispered as he walked past. Colin tried to include his friend, but his family and schoolfriends surrounded him,

bombarding him with questions about the city. At last Tintoretto tapped Colin on the shoulder.

"I think I'll head back to town," he said. "I've forgotten some business I should attend to." Of course, this wasn't true, but Tintoretto didn't want to stay where he wasn't welcome.

"Don't go," pleaded Colin. "I thought you were going to stay for a month and be my guest."

"I'm sorry," sighed Tintoretto. "I can't."

"Good riddance!" whispered someone.

Colin spun around, but he didn't catch who had spoken.

"Yes! Go back to town, stranger," hissed someone else.

Colin was deeply disappointed by his friends and family. "Please stay the night," he begged.



Tintoretto shook his head. "It's best I'm on my way."

"At least let me walk you to the lane," said Colin.

"No need. Stay and enjoy your party. You are the guest of honour," said Tintoretto. "There's a full moon giving plenty of light. I can easily find my way."

Colin watched as Tintoretto set off toward the lane. His heart was heavy without his friend – there was no joy left in the celebrations. He turned to go.

Suddenly, there was a cry from the edge of the cornfield. It was Tintoretto! "Hide!" he shouted. "I've seen an owl!" The shabby town

mouse ran bravely toward the country mice, making sure everyone could hear him. “An owl is coming. Hide!”

Quick as a flash, the little mice ran for cover in trees and bushes. The great bird swooped over, looking hungrily for prey. Tintoretto and Colin crouched in a hollow log. Carol and Charlie wriggled in next to them. “Thank you!” Carol said, squeezing Tintoretto’s paw, once the owl had flown on by.

“You saved our lives,” agreed Charlie.

“It’s nothing,” said Tintoretto.

“It’s everything,” said Colin. “You’re a true friend.”

Carol felt very bad. “We’re sorry we didn’t talk to you earlier. We’d all like to be your friends now – if you’ll have us,” she said.

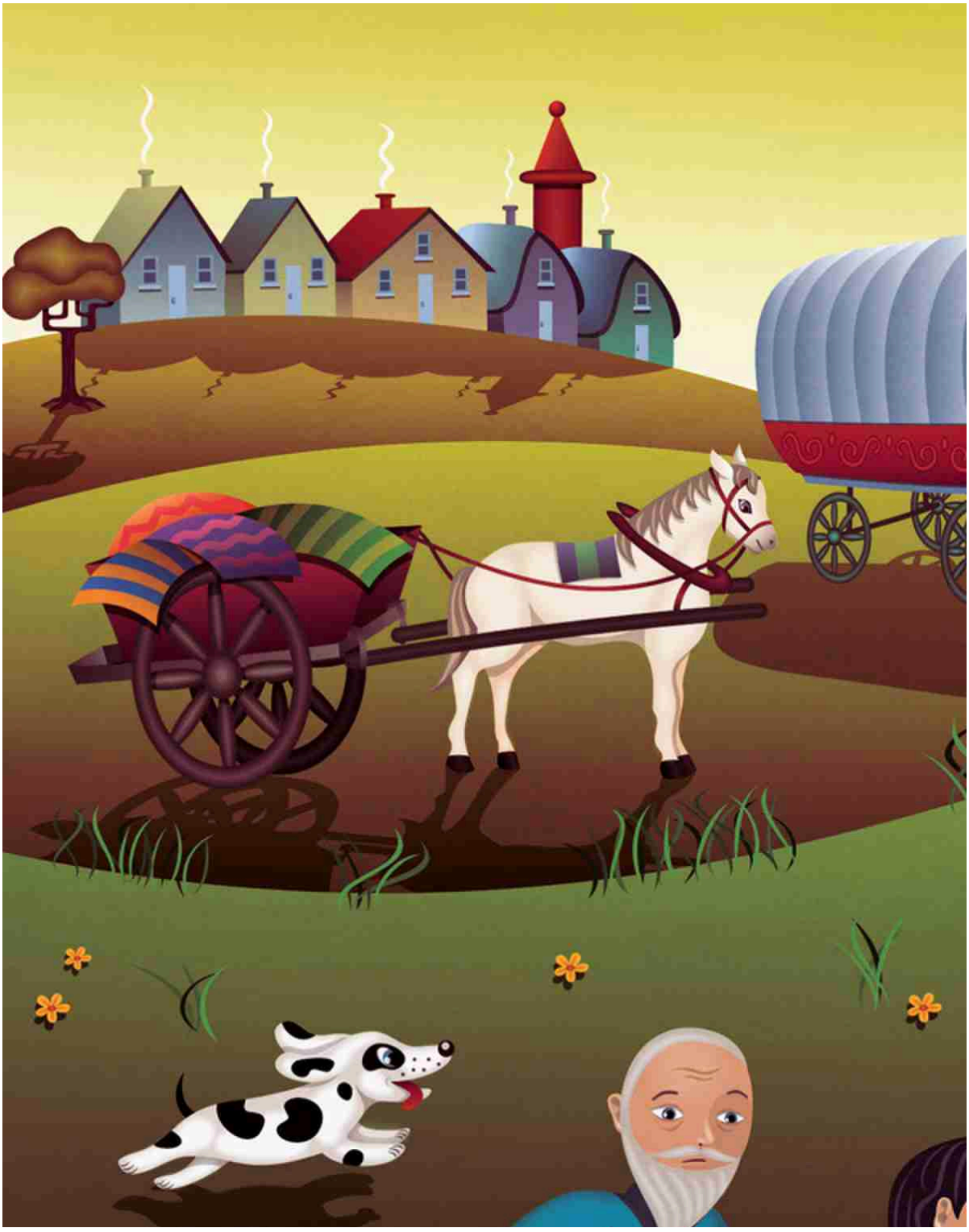


“We were rude,” agreed Charlie. “Please forgive us.”

Tintoretto smiled. “Of course I forgive you. Any friend of Colin’s is a friend of mine,” he said. And, as all the country mice gradually came

out of hiding, they gathered around the town mouse to hear his stories – and dance together until dawn.


APPEARANCES DO
ANYTHING - IT'S
SOMEONE'S HEAR



THE WHATNOT FRUIT

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about some travellers who arrived one evening at the edge of a village. They were tired, so they decided to stop for the night and were looking forward to a well-earned rest. That is, until they discovered an exotic fruit and suddenly everything changed. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... setting up camp was a busy time for the travellers. They bustled around as they lifted colourful carpets from their caravans and laid them out on the ground. Then, they gathered wood and built a big fire. Soon, pots and pans were rattling away merrily on the fire, sending delicious aromas floating over the little camp. And when dinner was finally ready, everyone gathered together around the fire to eat.

After they had eaten all their food, a little girl called Polly, one of the children of the group, turned to her mother and pointed to a huge tree full of sweet and juicy-looking, orange-coloured fruits. "Mother," she said, "I'm still a little hungry. Please may we have some fruits from that tree for dessert? They look so delicious!"

Her mother looked at the tree and frowned.

“Yes, they do look tempting. But I don’t recognize that tree or its fruits. You know that we shouldn’t eat anything we don’t recognize or haven’t eaten before – they could turn out to be poisonous.”

“But they look like big juicy mangoes!” said Polly.

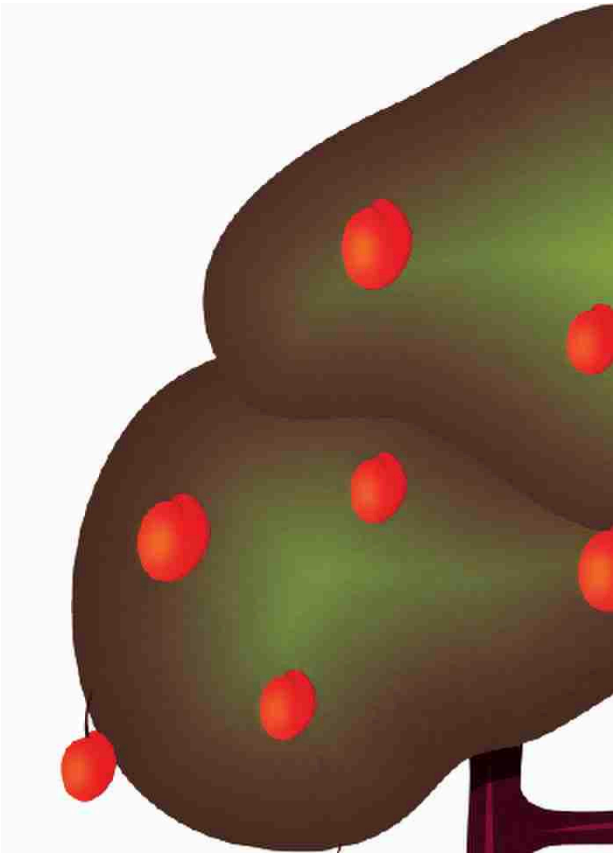
“Well, the fruits do *look* like mangoes, but the tree doesn’t look like a mango *tree*,” replied her mother. “So I’m not sure. See what your father thinks.”

“Father, father, can we eat some fruits from that tree? Pleeease!” pleaded Polly. Together, Polly and her father went over to the tree and he picked one of the brightly coloured fruits. He sniffed it and then let it drop to the ground.

“Listen, Polly. Listen, children,” he said. “I know you’re all tempted to eat these orange fruits, but I don’t think that they’re mangoes, so we shouldn’t take a chance. As your mother said, we don’t know what fruits they really are, so none of us should eat them.”

But Polly wasn’t listening and she picked up the fruit that her father had dropped. Her mouth was watering because it looked so delicious. She turned her back to the others. “What harm could it do if I just have one little bite?” she thought to herself.

Before anyone could notice she had peeled back a patch of the fruit’s skin and bitten into the juicy flesh. “Mmm, it’s so sweet!” she exclaimed, and took another bite. Some of the other children saw her and copied her.



“Polly!” cried her mother. “What are you doing?”

Polly turned to face her mother, the juice from the fruit staining her lips. “I ... I feel a little strange ...” she started to say, but the look of disbelief on her mother’s face stopped her mid-sentence.



“You’re turning orange like the fruit!” her mother cried.

Polly looked down at her fingers, which were gradually going bright orange, and watched, spellbound, as the carroty colour spread down her legs. She was now orange from the top of her head to the tips of her toes!

There were shrieks of disbelief as the other few children who had eaten the fruit started to turn orange, too. No one knew what to do, as, one by one, the orange children fell deeply sleep. Their parents tried to wake them up, but with no success. Some of the travellers went to the small huts of the local village to ask for help, but no one answered their door. So the worried parents kept watch over their children all night.

Even when the birds started to sing their dawn chorus, and the sun climbed above the nearby hill, Polly and her friends still lay fast sleep – and bright orange.

Now, in the past when travellers had come to this village, nearly *all* of them had eaten fruit from the tempting tree – which the villagers called the “Whatnot” fruit. Then, while the travellers were sleeping, the bad villagers would creep out and help themselves to all their possessions. And so it was this morning that the village thieves came to steal, as usual. But this time, when they got to the camp, they were surprised to find everyone, except a few children, awake. When the travellers saw the villagers, they asked them for help, but the thieves were so shocked that they could only ask, “How come you didn’t *all* eat the Whatnot fruits? Everyone else always has.”

“Well, firstly, we didn’t recognize the fruits, so we didn’t think they were safe,” replied Polly’s father. “And secondly, we wondered why so much ripe fruit was left unpicked on a tree next to a village – it seemed very strange.”

“You’re very wise, and your caution has saved you,” confessed one of the thieves. “Usually, once the travellers have eaten the fruit and fallen asleep, we take their things. I know it’s wrong, but we’re very poor,” he said, ashamed.

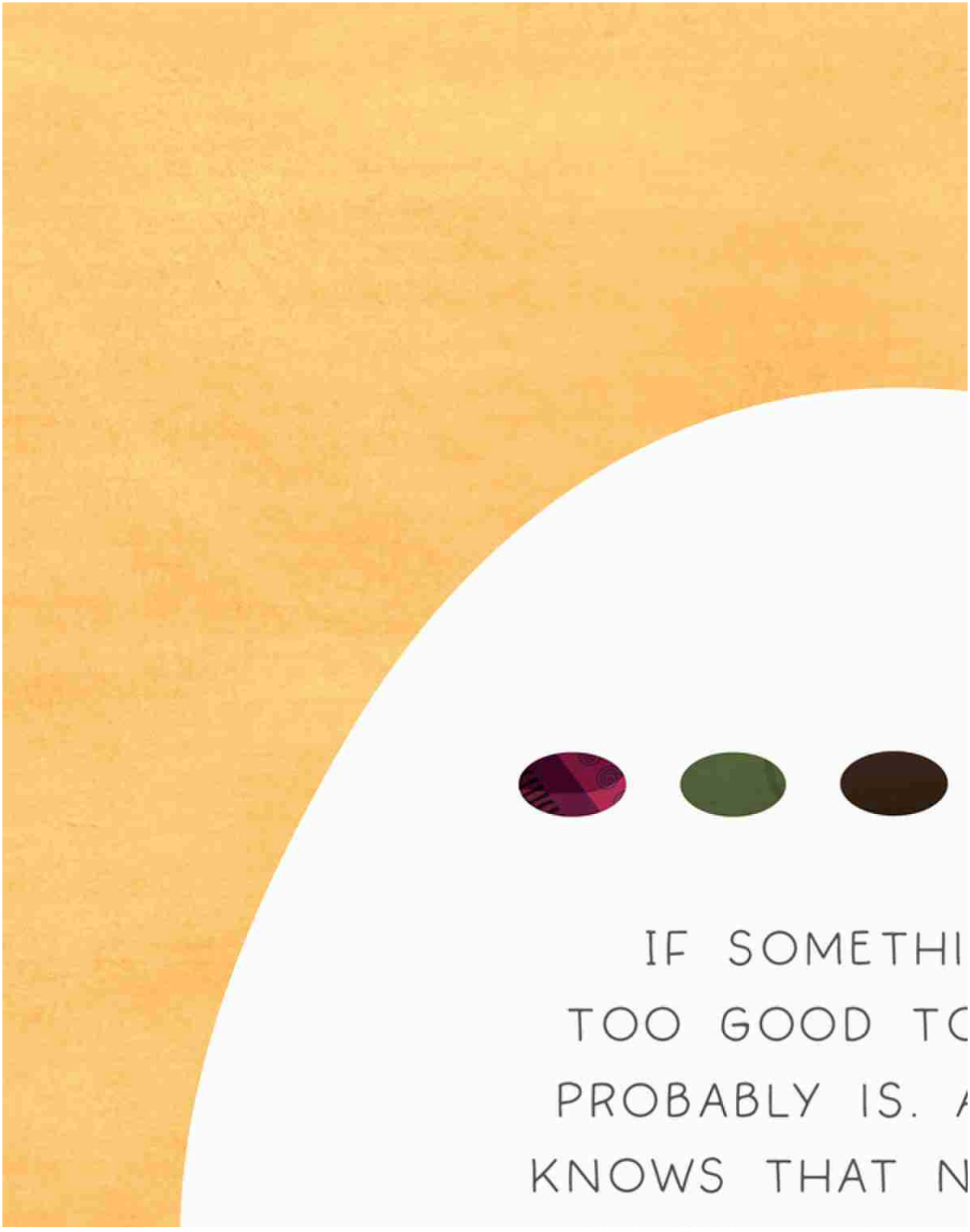
“Well,” said Polly’s father. “How about making a deal? *We* won’t tell anyone about this if *you* explain to us how to waken our children, as well as pick all the Whatnot fruits, bury them and promise never to trick people in this way again. We’ll be back to check.”

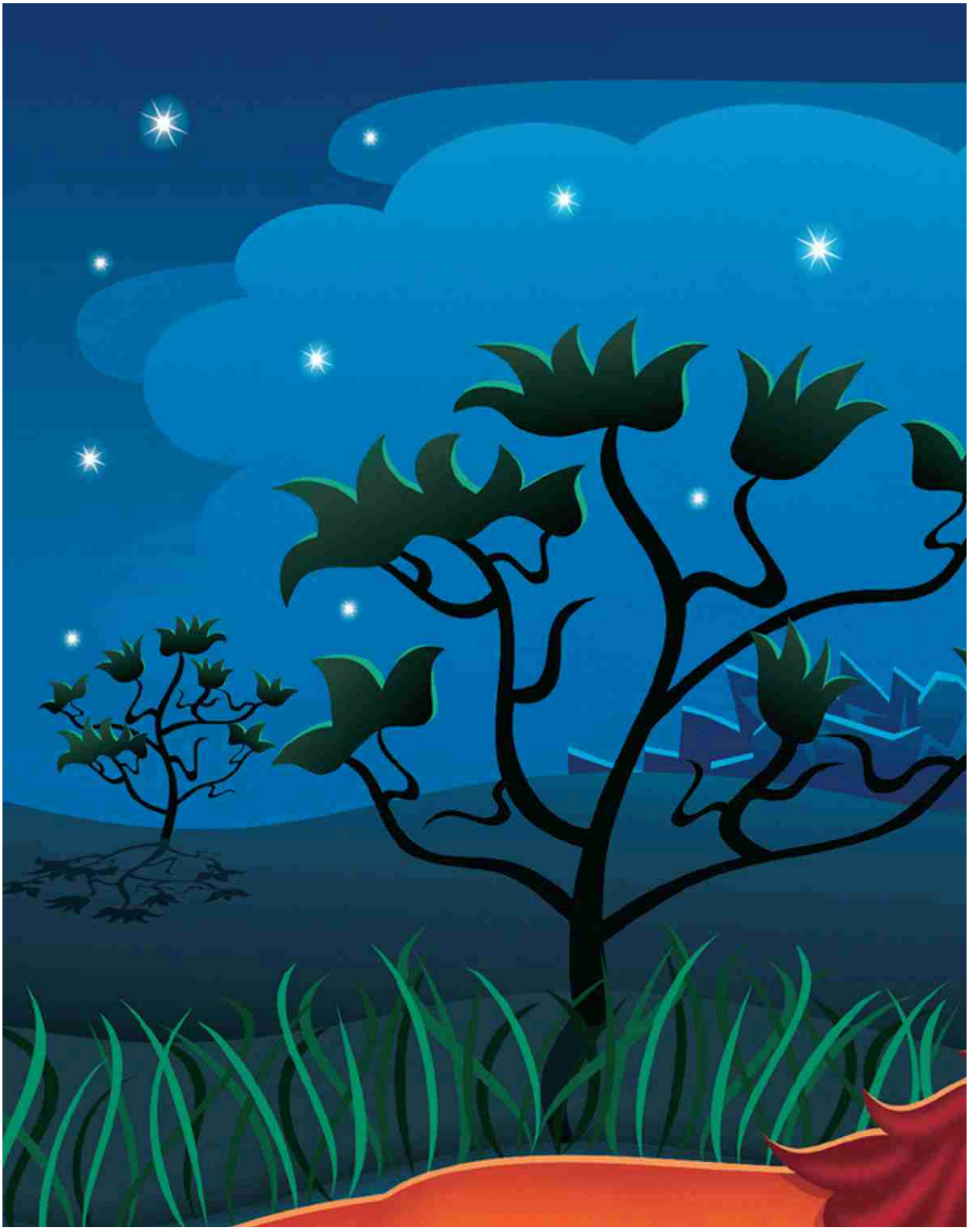
The thieves didn’t want their village to get a bad name, so they agreed. “The fruit is harmless,” they said reassuringly. “Your children are just in an enchanted sleep. They’ll wake up in a few hours and feel completely normal.” And, indeed, it wasn’t long before the

sleeping children began to stir, and, to everyone's relief, they soon returned to their normal colour and their usual selves.

Polly learned from this experience and always tried to listen to others' advice and to resist temptation. But she never forgot the tantalizing taste of the Whatnot fruit. Sometimes she longed to take a big juicy bite again ... and one day she did just that – but only in a dream!




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THE LION AND THE JACKAL

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a mighty lion who lived on a vast, grassy plain. Although he was a kind lion, most of the animals feared him, and he didn't have many friends. But all that was to change when, one day, the lion found himself in trouble. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... on this particular day, the lion set off to explore the far side of the plain. After some time, he began to feel thirsty, so he went down to the great lake to get a drink. He waded a little way in and lapped up the cool, fresh water. But as he tried to return to the water's edge, he felt himself slowly sinking into the mud.

He tried to pull himself free, but the more he struggled the more he stuck fast. He looked to the sun for help, but the sun was taking a

rest from shining, behind some thick, dark clouds. The lion was still stuck when nighttime came, and the moon climbed into the dark sky. He called to the moon for help, but she was too busy chatting to a star to hear him. Soon he began to give up hope of ever being rescued.

Just then a little jackal came along, singing to himself. “Goodness me! A lion!” he exclaimed. Terrified, the startled jackal was about to jump for cover into the undergrowth when the lion called out to him. “Help me! Please, Mr Jackal, help me – I’m completely stuck in this mud.”

“The king of the jungle wants help from me?” thought the jackal in amazement. Turning to the lion, he said, “But if I free you, you’ll just gobble me up!”

“I won’t, I promise. I’m a lion of my word. Please don’t be afraid,” said the lion. “If you help to free me, I’ll be your friend for ever.”

The jackal was a kind soul who didn’t like to see anyone suffer, so he gathered all his courage and approached the lion. With a lot of huffing and puffing and scrabbling around, he dug the mud from around the lion’s great paws. The lion tried really hard to pull his paws free and, one by one, managed to lift them out of the mud. Then he scrambled up the bank, shook his great mane, threw back his head and roared, “I’m free! And it’s all thanks to you, my friend. It’s late and dark, and I live far from here. Would you help me again by letting me stay at your home tonight?” he asked.

“Well ... er ...” started the jackal reluctantly.

“Of course, I give you my word that I won’t harm you or your family,” interrupted the lion, who could see that his new friend was worried.

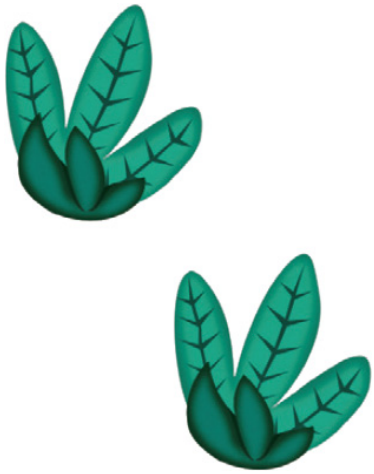
“Well, if you promise ... I suppose ... Yes, you’re welcome to come, but my home is small and plain,” replied the jackal, who decided that

he could trust the lion.

Off they went to the jackal's home. Mrs Jackal was very startled to see the lion, and the little jackal pups were so frightened that they ran to hide behind her back.



"Don't worry, my dears. The lion is my friend," said the jackal proudly, and he explained how he had rescued him from the mud. Mrs Jackal was still rather suspicious.



But then the lion said, “Today you did me a great service, my friend. As the king of the jungle, I would like to repay you for all your kindness by taking care of you and your family from now on. I would like you to come and live with me and my family in our luxurious royal den.”

After some discussion, the jackals agreed, and so the next morning they all set off to the lion’s den. The families lived happily together and, as time went by, the lion and the jackal became the best of friends.

However, the lioness gradually began to resent their friendship, fearing that the lion loved the jackal family more than his own family. It started as a small thought, but the more she dwelled upon it, the more the seed of jealousy grew in her heart until it had taken over all her thoughts. One day, she decided that they had to go.

From then on, whenever she was alone with Mrs Jackal, the lioness would find fault with her or criticize the little jackal pups.

At first, Mrs Jackal ignored the lioness’s unkind ways, but eventually, after a particularly horrible day, Mrs Jackal said to her husband, “I fear we are no longer welcome here. Mrs Lion complains about everything I do. The lion must want us to leave.”

Now, the jackal didn’t believe that the lion would break his promise, so he went straight to him and said, “My friend, perhaps we have outstayed our welcome in your home – your wife no longer seems to want us here. Would you like us to leave?”

Surprised, the lion asked his wife, “My dear, is this true? Do you want our friends to go?”

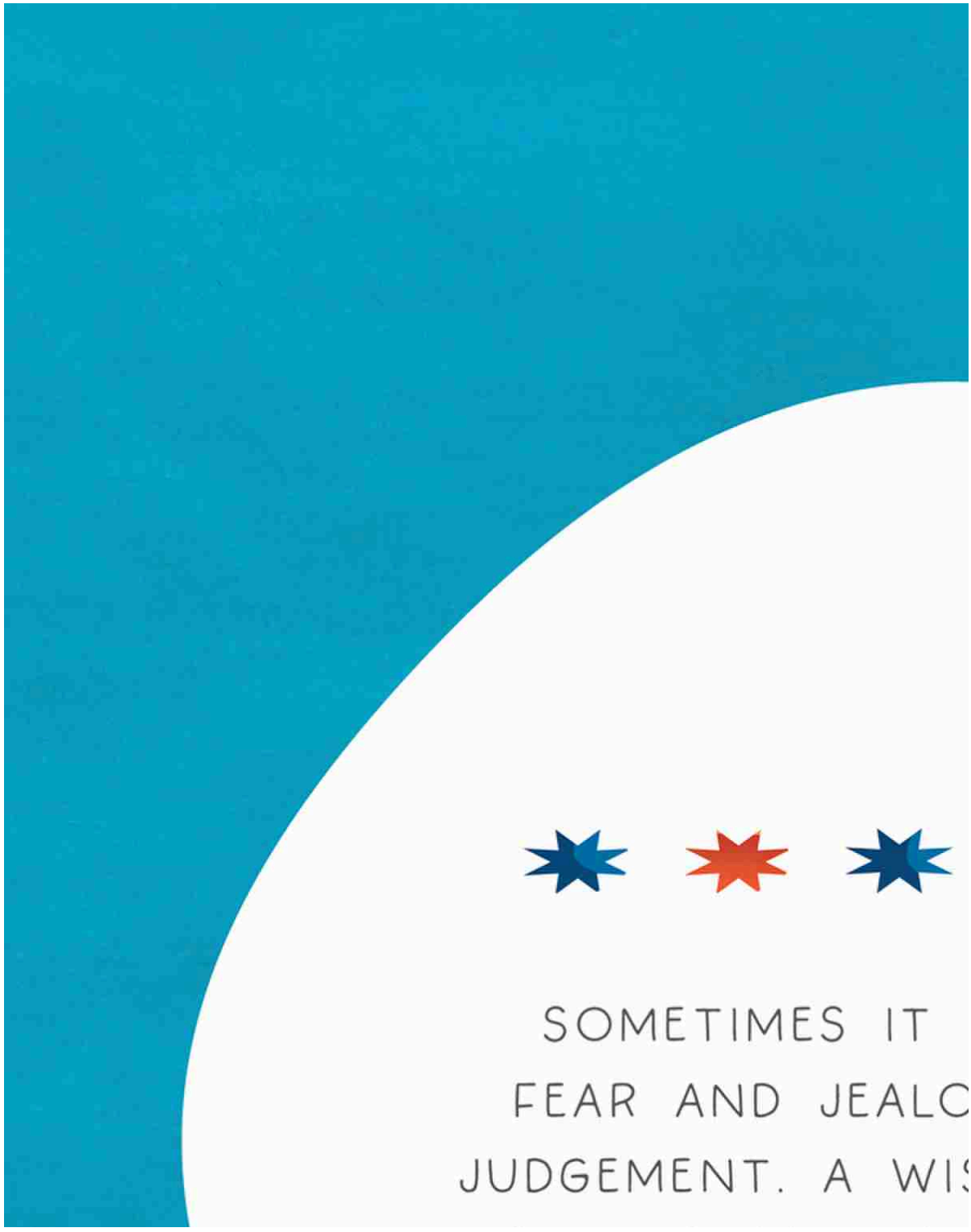
Mrs Lion looked up sadly and replied, “I’m sorry, but these days you seem to put the jackal family before your own. You don’t appear to care much about us any more.”

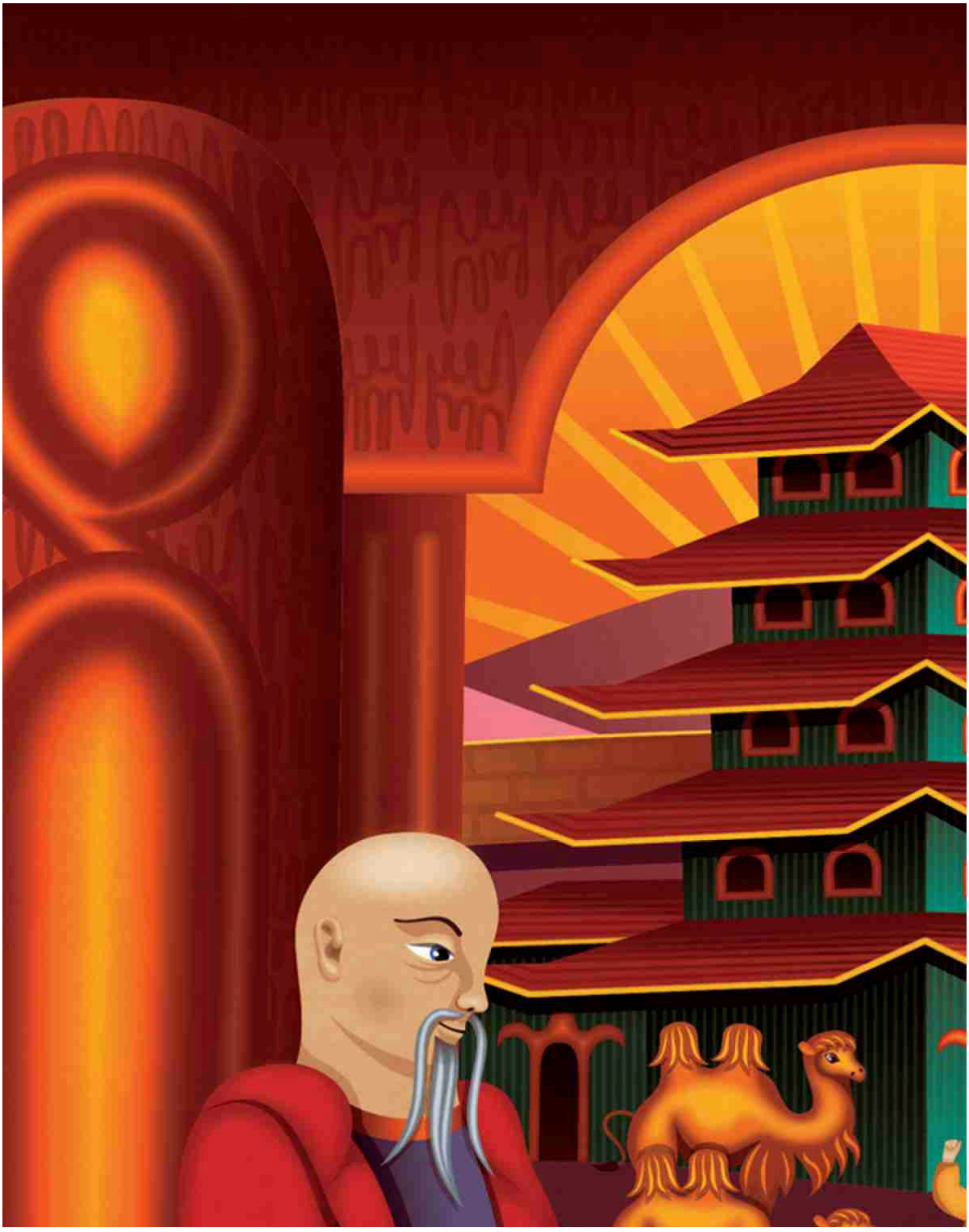
“My darling wife!” replied the lion. “Let me assure you that my love for you and our cubs is in no way lessened by my love for our friends. When the jackal saved my life, I became forever in his debt, so I offered him and his family my protection. Caring for them only enriches my love for you and our cubs.”

Hearing this, the lioness felt very ashamed of her jealousy. She apologized again and again to the jackal family and after that day she became firm friends with the lovely Mrs Jackal.

From then on, the two families spent the rest of their days enjoying each other’s company, without further resentment or arguments. And their descendants lived happily together for generations to come.




SOMETIMES IT
FEAR AND JEALO
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THE PRINCE WITH A LOT TO LEARN

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a young prince, who lived in a lavish palace in the desert. He loved to play all day with his friends. That is, until one day a stranger appeared and everything changed. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... the prince and his friends were happily playing ball in the courtyard when they heard a knock on the big wooden door. They stopped their games in surprise, for the palace was so remote that there were seldom visitors. "Let's go and see who it is!" shouted the young prince. A servant opened the door and there stood a tall, bearded, simply dressed man looking down at him with a twinkle in his eye.

"Good morning, sir," said the prince, as he greeted the stranger. "Have you come to see my father, the king?"

"Good morning, Your Highness," replied the stranger. "No, I'm actually here to see you. I'm going to be your teacher." The young prince's smile faded. "I see ..." he replied gravely.

His parents had told him that some day he would have to learn all the things a king should know. He was just surprised that the time

had come so soon. The young prince bowed to the man, who bowed in return, and then his new teacher followed the servant to be presented to the king.

That night, when the queen was tucking the prince into bed, she noticed he was unusually quiet. She looked into his eyes and said, “My dear son. You’re growing into a man. When your father and I become too old to rule, our great nation will be in your hands.”

“But I don’t want to grow up,” he replied.

“I know,” she said, as she smiled and kissed him goodnight, “but everything will be just fine.”

From then on the prince spent his days learning about his country and the world beyond. He was introduced to important people and observed his father at work. In short, he was taught everything that made a man worthy to be a king.

Years passed, and the prince grew tall, strong and wise. Then one morning, the teacher calmly closed his book and said, “Your Highness, I have taught you all I know and my work here is done. It’s time for me to leave.”

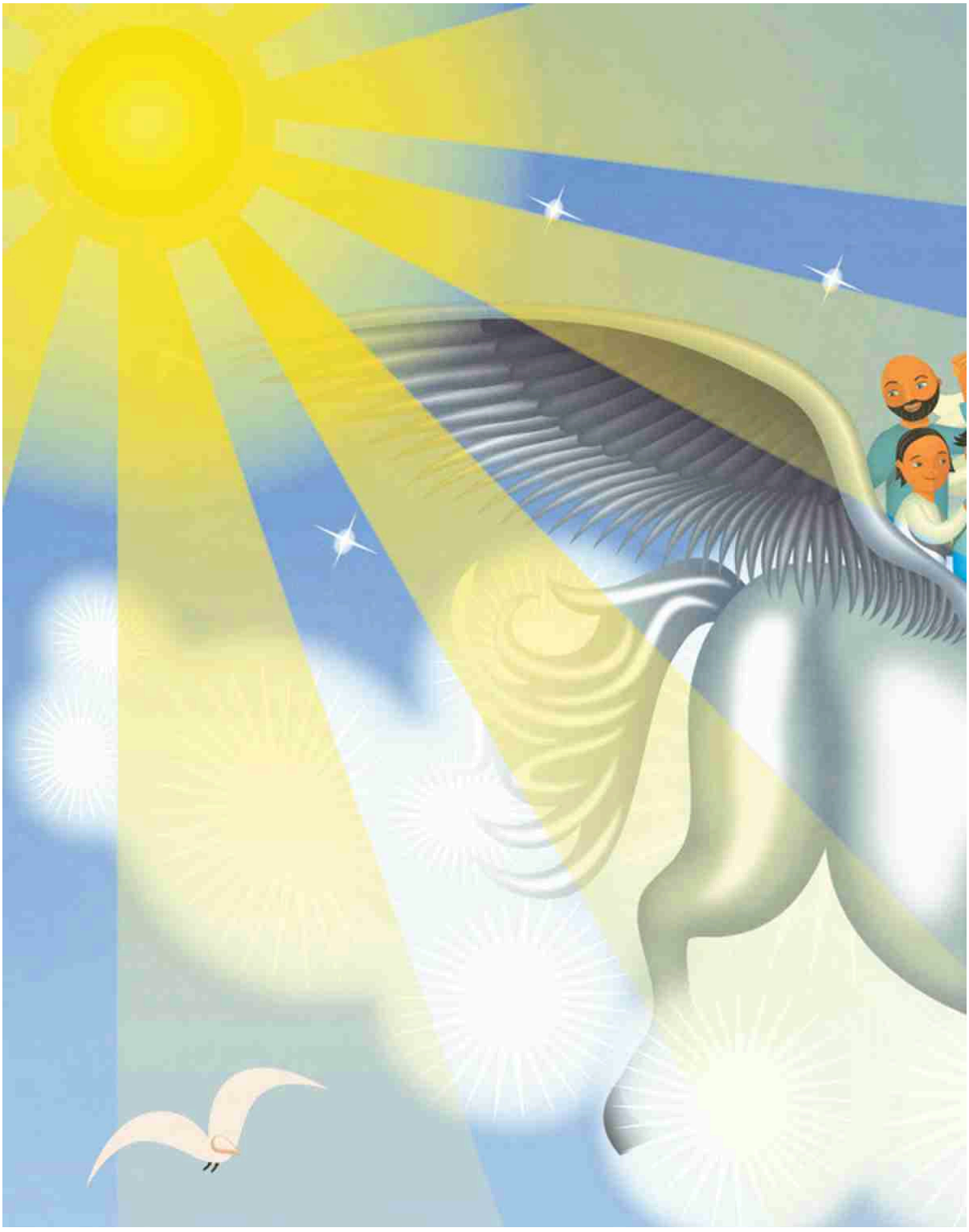
The prince had always known that this day would come, yet he loved and respected his teacher so much that he begged him to stay. But the teacher gently said it was time to move on.

The prince wept as his teacher departed. The queen wiped away his tears, saying, “Be at peace. Everything has its time, and nothing lasts forever. Your days of study are over, and soon you will be king.”



Before long the prince was indeed king. He married a princess from a distant land and they had abeautiful daughter. One day, when the little princess was playing with her friends, there was a knock on the castle door. “Let’s go and see who it is!” she shouted. The door opened and standing there was a tall, bearded, simply dressed man looking down at her with a twinkle in his eye ...







GOBLIN ISLAND

Relax, be very still and listen – listen carefully to this tale about a crew of adventurous sailors who got caught in a ferocious storm. Do you want to know what happened? Let's see if we can find out!

Now ... one day, as the sailors' ship was bobbing up and down in the breeze, a great black storm cloud sprang out of the blue sky and whipped the sea into a frothing rage. Their boat was rocked to and fro for hours, until it crashed into some rocks. There it lay until the storm finally passed, and when the dazed sailors looked around them, they found themselves on a beautiful beach of glistening sand fringed with lush palm trees. They couldn't believe their luck – it looked like paradise! Then, out of nowhere, appeared a group of beautiful women, carrying baskets of delicious fruits and new

clothes, and inviting them to stay in their huts. And so it was that, for days on end, the sailors were treated like kings by these women, being fed one scrumptious meal after another. It all seemed too good to be true – so much so that they forgot all about their normal lives and their families and friends waiting at home.

After several days, a sailor asked one of the women why there were no men on the island. She replied that they had sailed away many years ago and never returned. That night the same sailor heard voices, so he crept from his bed to the next hut and listened at the door. “We need to fatten them up and eat them before they escape,” said a woman’s voice.

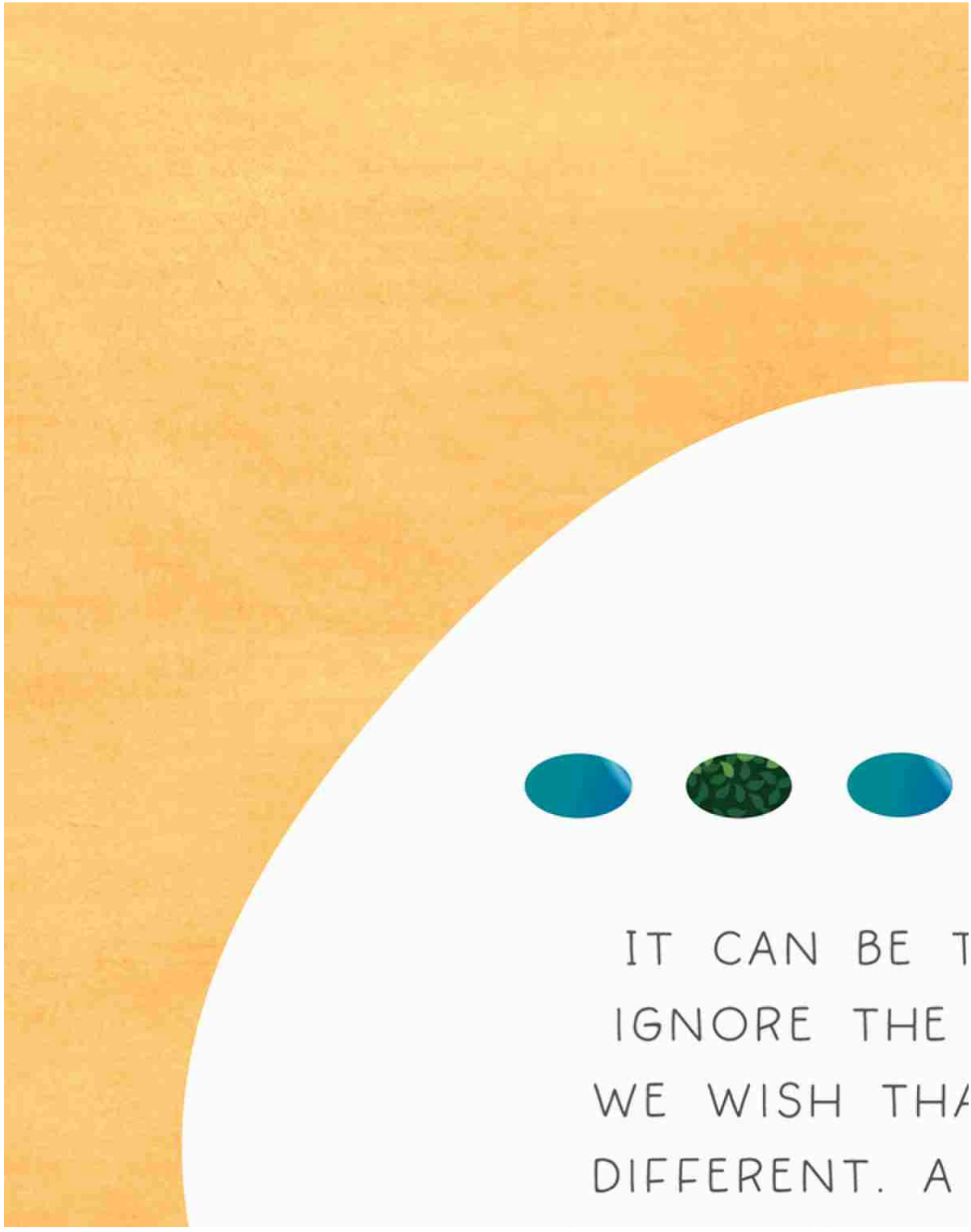
Peeping through a crack in the door, the sailor saw – to his astonishment – a group of ugly goblins instead of the beautiful women he had expected! “We’ve been tricked!” he gasped. “They’re not women, but goblins in disguise, and they’re feeding us up so we’re juicy to eat!”

In the morning, he told his fellow sailors what he’d seen and heard. When they realized they’d been deceived, they were all terribly frightened – all, that is, except for one big strong sailor. “You must have been dreaming!” he insisted. “These beautiful women can’t possibly be goblins. I’m not leaving.”

While he stomped off back to the huts, the others fell to their knees and begged the gods of the happy lands to help them. One of the gods, who had been watching all along, was pleased they had realized their mistake and decided to help them. In a flash, he changed himself into a magnificent winged silver horse, and flew to the island. The grateful sailors climbed onto his back, sadly leaving behind their stubborn shipmate who still didn’t believe the truth. However, just as the great horse began to spread his wings, they were overjoyed to see the last sailor come sprinting after them and

clamber gratefully onto the horse's back. "I saw goblins heating the pot to cook us in!" he spluttered. "I'm sorry I wouldn't listen – I just didn't want to believe it." And his last words were whisked away by the wind as the horse flew effortlessly up and up into the sky to safety, until Goblin Island was just a tiny speck in the great blue ocean.




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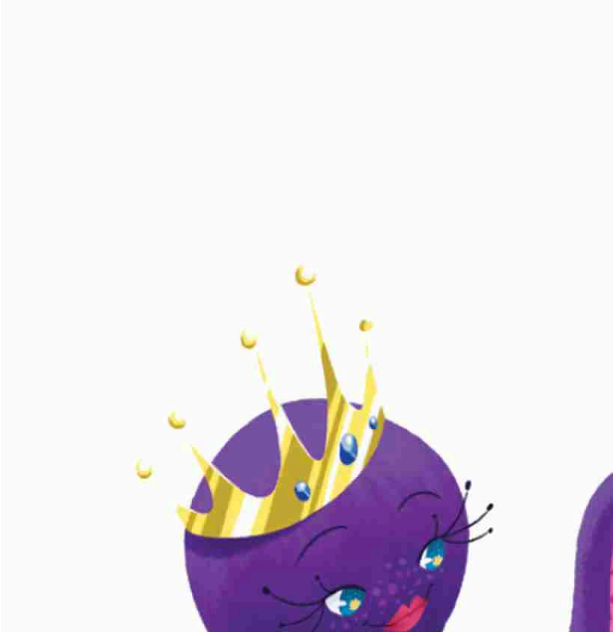
THE ART OF MEDITATION

Although the practice of meditation is often associated with Eastern philosophy and religion, we are all born with the innate ability to meditate, so it can be done by anyone of any age or creed. Even if we don't know it, we have all, at times, experienced its calming effects when we were completely absorbed in a particular activity – for example, while listening to music, watching a sunset or engaged in a particular hobby. At such times, we feel contented, peaceful and at one with the world. By learning to consciously meditate, we can bring this same deep focus into our everyday life, so that it gradually becomes our abiding state of being, rather than a occasional, brief experience.

It can be useful to explain the concept of meditation to your child as going on a journey of adventure or discovery. This will encourage them to be open to and to learn to work with whatever unfolds. However, it's important to make sure that they feel safe and that they know they can stop at any time if they become uncomfortable or tired.

It's good to set aside 5–10 minutes each day in which to do a guided meditation (see pages 336–48) with your child. You may like to incorporate this into their bedtime routine – either instead of or after reading one of the stories in this book, which, of course, have a powerful meditative quality themselves in that they focus your child's attention and encourage them to visualize settings, characters and events.

Encourage older children, who may be ready to meditate on their own, to start with five minutes per day, and gradually build up to 10 or 15 minutes. Naturally, the length of time that they are able to sit for will vary from child to child, but they will soon get an idea of what is appropriate by how it makes them feel. The quality of the meditation session is more important than its length, and the more regularly they practice, the greater the benefits they will enjoy. Try to get your child to meditate at the same time in the same place each day. In the evening, just before going to bed, is the best time for most people, as they can go to sleep straight afterward. However, they should feel free to practise in the morning or at any other time of the day, if they prefer. It's a good idea to be fully prepared before meditation. Your child should wear warm, loose clothing and should wash their hands and face before beginning to cleanse themselves symbolically of their everyday activities. Then choose a quiet place where interruptions are unlikely, turn off any phones and dim any lights. When all the practical preparations have been completed, they can relax and get comfortable by doing the pre-meditation relaxation exercise on pages 26–7. In order to get the most from meditation, it's important that your child learns how to sit well. They need to be comfortable and relaxed yet fully alert while they practise, so it's best if they sit either on a cushion on the floor or on a bed, with their back straight but unsupported. They should close their eyes and rest their hands loosely in their lap. If you are guiding your child's meditation, speak in a very slow, relaxed voice, pausing from time to time to let your words sink in, so that they can follow you easily and/or conjure up the scene as vividly as possible. It's also important to let them know that it's quite natural for their mind to get distracted or to wander, and that if this happens, all they have to do is bring their attention back to their body.





Metta Meditation

This meditation is derived from the traditional Buddhist practice called *metta bhavana*, which is a Pali term meaning “the development of loving- kindness”. The word *bhavana* means to develop or cultivate; while *metta* means “love” – not in a romantic sense but instead a heartfelt warmth or kindness for yourself and all other living beings.

By meditating on loving-kindness, you can enhance not only positive feelings toward yourself but also toward family, friends, acquaintances and, ultimately, all beings, making compassionate behaviour an integral part of everyday life. Metta is particularly useful for transforming negative feelings into positive ones. Your child can tap into it any time they are feeling jealous, angry or upset – for example, after they have had an argument with a friend. More broadly, the meditation opposite will help them to become less selfish and more tolerant, which will, in turn, encourage more positive emotions and responses from all those with whom they come into contact.

Begin the meditation by inviting your child to sit comfortably with their eyes closed. Ask them to breathe deeply for a moment or two. Then, gently read the exercise out loud to them. You might like to join in the meditation on loving- kindness yourself.



“So with a boundless heart Should one cherish all living beings:
Radiating kindness over the entire world.

Focus your attention on your body and smile as broadly as you can. Feel your heart get bigger as you smile. Imagine yourself surrounded by beautiful golden light and say: ‘May I be happy – may I be really happy from my head right down to my toes.’

Then, say: ‘I love myself dearly.’

Now imagine all your family – your mother and father, brothers and sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and pets. In your mind’s eye see them standing in front of you, smiling, surrounded by beautiful golden light, and say: ‘May my family be happy – may they be really happy from their heads right down to their toes.’

Then, say: ‘I love my family dearly.’

Now think of your friends, teachers and neighbours. Imagine them standing in front of you, smiling, surrounded by beautiful golden light, and say: ‘May my friends, teachers and neighbours be happy – may they be really happy from their heads right down to their toes.’

Then, say: ‘I love my friends, teachers and neighbours dearly.’

Next, bring your focus back to yourself and see the golden light that surrounds you spreading out to all the people and animals in the world. Imagine the Earth surrounded by a beautiful golden light and say: ‘May all beings be happy – may they be really happy from their heads right down to their toes.’

Then, say: ‘I love all beings and accept love from all of them, too.’

Now slowly wiggle your toes and fingers, and open your eyes.

Try to keep this love for everyone in your heart at all times.”





Rainbow Meditation

Rainbows lift our mood with their bright colours when they appear, as if by magic, after rain. This meditation encourages your child to draw positive inspiration from the colours of a rainbow to boost their self-confidence. Ask them to sit comfortably with their eyes closed.

“Take a deep breath in ... and out, and feel your body relax. Picture yourself surrounded by red light. Imagine breathing in the red light, and it filling you with energy.

Now see yourself surrounded by orange light. Imagine breathing in the orange light, and it filling you with strength.

Next, visualize yourself surrounded by yellow light. Imagine breathing in the yellow light, and it filling you with happiness.

Then, picture yourself surrounded by green light. Imagine breathing in the green light, and it filling you with friendship.

Now, see yourself surrounded by blue light. Imagine breathing in the blue light, and it filling you with peace.

Next, picture yourself surrounded by indigo light. Imagine breathing in the indigo light, and it filling you with gentleness.

Now, visualize yourself surrounded by violet light. Imagine breathing in the violet light, and it filling you with love.

Finally, imagine a bright rainbow carrying all this energy, strength, happiness, friendship, peace, gentleness and love from your heart into your home, your street, your town, your country ... the whole world.

Slowly let the rainbow fade. Breathe slowly as you relax. Now wiggle your toes and fingers, and open your eyes."



Golden Light Mindful Breathing

Mindfulness meditations help children to develop more focus and self- awareness. This exercise introduces your child to the experience of paying attention to the breath, linking it with the powerful visual image of flowing, golden light. It's a simple, quick practice that, once they've tried it out a few times, can be helpful in everyday life – if they are upset and need to calm themselves down, for example; or if they need to settle their mind and focus for a particular task. Before you start, ask your child to get into a comfortable, cosy position. Then, gently read the following words out loud to them:

"Notice how you are feeling. Take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nose. And then a long, slow breath out through your mouth. Take another long, gentle breath in and feel your body fill with

air; then breathe a slow breath out. Let your body soften and feel nice and cosy.



Now, imagine that your breath is a beautiful, soft, golden light. Make your next breaths long and gentle, first in, then out. Imagine your body is filling with soft, golden light with each new golden breath from right up at the top of your head, flowing down, down, out along your arms to your hands, gentle, golden light flowing to the tips of your fingers. As you continue to breathe, imagine yourself feeling cosier and cosier.

Feel the golden light flow down your back, fill and relax your chest, and then fill and soften your tummy, before moving down into your legs, into your feet, then filling each of your toes. As the golden light flows through you, you feel more and more relaxed.

If you get distracted, just notice your body again, notice your breath and imagine the golden light filling you with warmth and ease.

Finally, as you breathe out, let the golden light flow out of your mouth into the air around you.

Notice how you are feeling now.

Well done!”



Cultivating Kind, Friendly Wishes

By really paying attention to feeling, children can learn that, rather than emotions being fixed entities, they can change according to what we decide to do with them. The meditation below focuses on feelings of friendliness and appreciation, teaching your child how to be more compassionate toward others – and also toward themselves. Before you start, ask your child to get into a comfortable, cosy position. Then, gently read the following words out loud to them:

"Notice how you are feeling. Take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nose. And then a long, slow breath out through your mouth. Take another long, gentle breath in and feel your body fill with air; then breathe a slow breath out. Let your body soften and feel nice and cosy.

Now think of someone you like spending time with, someone who makes you happy. Maybe it's a friend or someone from your family. Imagine that that person is with you right now. Notice how you feel when you think of this person. Whatever you feel is OK.

Now, imagine that you are looking at them and telling them what you like about them. It could be anything at all: it might be their generosity or the fact that they are your friend.

Next, imagine saying to them that you wish them happiness, you want them to be strong and healthy, you want them to have lots of kind friends and a peaceful life.

Imagine, as you are wishing your friend well, that a beautiful flower is blossoming near his or her heart. The flower can be any colour you wish.

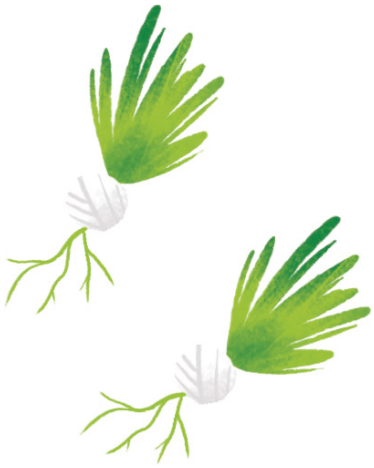
As you think of your friend, imagine that the fragrance of the flower perfumes the air around both of you.

Now, imagine that your friend is looking at you and saying all these things to you: ‘I want you to be happy, I want you to be healthy and strong, I want you to feel peaceful.’

Notice how you are feeling now.

Well done!”





Visiting the Magical, Relaxing Garden

This meditation is inspired by the royal gardens in the story called “The Princess and the Precious Pearls” on pages 253–57. You can use it at any time to help your child become more relaxed and calm, and to give them more confidence to work out problems that may arise in their life. Before you start, ask your child to get into a comfortable, cosy position. Then, gently read the following words out loud to them:

“Notice how you are feeling. Take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nose. And then a long, slow breath out through your mouth. Take another long, gentle breath in and feel your body fill with air; then breathe a slow breath out. Let your body soften and feel nice and cosy. Imagine yourself standing before two glittering golden gates set into majestic stone walls. Feel the ground below your feet as you look up at the gates. Above you the sky is blue and the sun is shining. You feel the warmth of the sun’s kiss on your skin. You

reach out and touch the gates. They swing open smoothly. The gates will open only for you. This is your garden, yours alone. You walk through the gates and onto a path.

The path glistens in the sunlight. You feel warm and safe. You can smell the perfume of the many flowers in the garden. You hear birds singing and chatting in the trees. You hear the sound of water as it tumbles into the fresh pools ahead of you. Little silver fish dance through the water. You sit on the edge of a pool and slip your feet and legs into the water. It feels cool and refreshing as it flows between your toes. You feel completely at peace.

Feel the gentle movements of your breath, in through your nose and gently, calmly, out through your mouth. You straighten your legs to raise your feet above the water. Water drops sparkle on your skin like millions of jewels. You stand up and make your way back up the path. You feel completely at peace.

As you reach the gates, you turn and look back at the garden. You step through the gates and they close softly behind you. Now, bring your attention back to your breathing. When you feel ready, open your eyes.

Notice how you are feeling now. Well done!”







Beautiful White Horse Meditation

This meditation is inspired by the story of the same name, and can help calm your child when he or she is highly stressed. Before you start, ask your child to get into a comfortable, cosy position. Then, gently read the following words out loud to them:

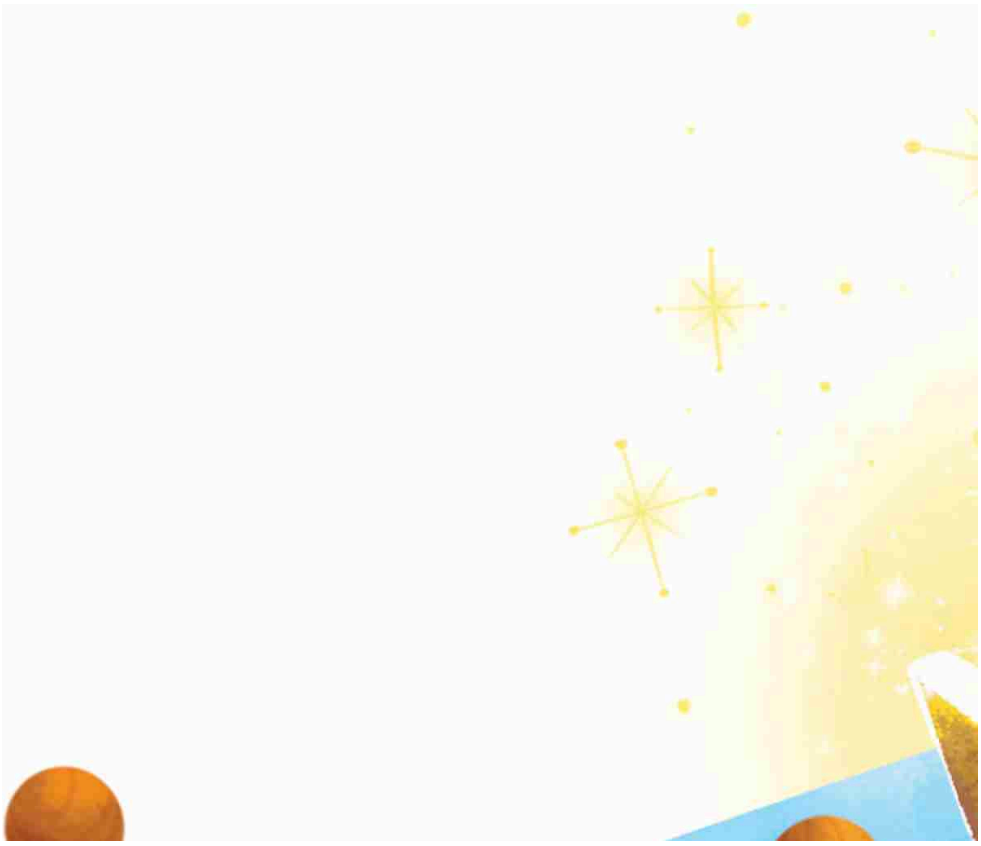
“Close your eyes and take some deep breaths in and out. Picture yourself in a forest. Enormous trees tower above you and ferns rise up on either side of the path you’re walking along. It’s very calm and peaceful here. All you can hear is the sound of the rustling leaves and the call of birds.

You’re breathing very slowly and deeply now. Sunlight dapples the path and you find that you’re trotting gently along it. You look down at

your feet and you see that they are hooves. You nod your head and you discover you have a flowing white mane. You realize you're a beautiful white horse.

You're perfectly safe and happy. Through the power of your mind you're able to make yourself calm. You're completely at peace with everything around you, and you feel so calm and relaxed now that you lie down and have a rest in a clearing.

You lie down on the ground and you realize you're no longer a horse but yourself once more. You're calm and relaxed just as you were when you were a horse, you're in control of your mind and you know that your mind is strong and powerful. You get up now and walk back along the path, back to where the forest ends, back home once more, carrying the knowledge of the strength and calmness of your mind with you."



NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

If anything in this book is inaccurate or misleading, I ask forgiveness of my teachers and of my readers for having unwittingly impeded their way. As for what is accurate, I hope the reader can use it, so that they may attain the truth to which it points.

A NOTE ON GENDER: In the introductory and concluding sections of this book intended for parents, “they” is used to refer to your child or children, to avoid burdening the reader repeatedly with phrases such as “he or she”.


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of delightful characters such as
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